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12: MIKE DICKERSON
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GUN WORLD

The Big Easy

BY CRAIG HODGKINS

IT'S NOT A BIG SECRET that the majority of new product introductions and "big announcements" in the shooting sports industry are timed to flow directly from the annual Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade (SHOT) Show, scheduled this year from January 19-22 in Las Vegas.

But in addition to that amazing extravaganza hosted by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) and the always-interesting National Rifle Association Annual Meetings and Exhibits—to be held on May 20-22 in Louisville, Kentucky—there is another show I try to never miss if my schedule allows.

The National Association of Sporting Goods Wholesalers (NASGW) puts it on, and it is everything that SHOT isn't...in all the right ways.

Please don't get me wrong. I love attending SHOT. Everything and everyone is there. In fact, it is just about the only time of year I can meet with the majority of our *Gun World* writers, because they don't want to miss out on anything either. But the greatest strength of SHOT also provides one of the bigger challenges associated with it.

No matter how hard you try, you simply can't see and do everything. I heard a couple of years ago that to visit every

SHOT Show booth, you could only spend an average of 12 seconds at each one. No wonder there are very few chairs available on the show floor.

Add in the huge number of product release events and hosted manufacturer lunches, you are information-challenged from Day 1. The best you can do is assemble a well-rested team and attempt the "divide and conquer" strategy.

That's just one reason why I enjoy attending the NASGW. For the companies that attend (since it is geared toward providing an opportunity for distributors, wholesalers and retailers to connect, some companies that handle those functions in-house don't come), it provides a nice, relaxed atmosphere to conduct and write business.

And, for those of us in the editorial side of things, it offers a chance to have relaxed, detailed conversations with a variety of company representatives.

This year, as if to emphasize the difference between SHOT, the NRA Annual Meetings and the NASGW show, the latter was held in New Orleans, also known as "The Big Easy."

Mixed together, the three events make up a perfect knowledge cocktail, and thankfully, I don't have to choose among a long drink of NASGW, a slug of NRA, or a quick SHOT. **GW**

Craig

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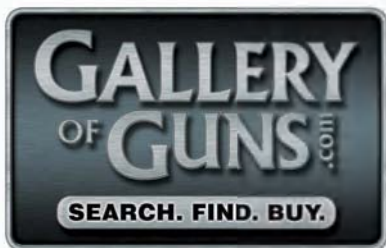
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LC9S-KP

Item #: 3256
Caliber: 9MM
Sights: Fixed 3-Dot

Capacity: 7+1
BBL: 3.12"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Kryptek Pontus Camo Frame
- Striker Fired
- Visual Chamber Inspection Port
- Magazine Disconnect



BU-9

Item #: SPEC0596A
Caliber: 9MM
Sights: 3-Dot

Capacity: 8+1 & 6+1
BBL: 3.07"



- Black Pronox Finish on Slide
- Purple Fiberglass Reinforced Technopolymer Frame
- Double Action Only
- Reversible Magazine Release



LC9S-KN

Item #: 3255
Caliber: 9MM
Sights: Fixed 3-Dot

Capacity: 7+1
BBL: 3.12"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Kryptek Neptune Camo Frame
- Striker Fired
- Visual Chamber Inspection Port
- Magazine Disconnect



LC9S-MG

Item #: 3243-RUG
Caliber: 9MM
Sights: Fixed 3-Dot

Capacity: 7+1
BBL: 3.12"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Muddy Girl Camo Frame
- Striker Fired
- Visual Chamber Inspection Port
- Magazine Disconnect



LCP

Item #: 3743
Caliber: 380
Sights: Fixed

Capacity: 6+1
BBL: 2.75"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Kryptek Neptune Camo Frame
- Weighs 9.4oz



LCP-MG

Item #: 3734
Caliber: 380
Sights: Fixed

Capacity: 6+1
BBL: 2.75"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Muddy Girl Camo Frame
- Weighs 9.4 oz



22/45 Lite

Item #: 3910
Caliber: 22LR
Sights: Adjustable

Capacity: 10+1
BBL: 4.4"



- Red Anodize Finish
- Zytel Poly Grip Frame
- Loaded Chamber Indicator
- Replaceable 1911-Style Grip Panels
- Threaded Barrel



LCP

Item #: 3744-RUG
Caliber: 380
Sights: Fixed

Capacity: 6+1
BBL: 2.75"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Kryptek Pontus Camo Frame
- Weighs 9.4 oz



22/45 Lite

Item #: 3909
Caliber: 22LR
Sights: Adjustable

Capacity: 10+1
BBL: 4.4"



- Black Anodize Finish
- Muddy Girl Camo Zytel Poly Grip Frame
- Loaded Chamber Indicator
- Replaceable 1911-Style Grip Panels
- Threaded Barrel



SR22PB

Item #: 3618
Caliber: 22LR
Sights: Adjustable 3-Dot

Capacity: 10+1
BBL: 3.5"



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Plano's X2 Range Bags are designed to work in conjunction with their heavy-duty polymer ammo cans. They make a few versions including ones with built-in pistol pouches.



To Protect... and Organize

PLANO OUTDOOR PRODUCTS MAKES IT EASY TO SAFELY AND EASILY TRANSPORT YOUR GEAR, WHETHER IT'S TO THE RANGE OR TO ANOTHER COUNTRY

► TEXT BY TIM STETZER AND PHOTOS COURTESY OF PLANO OUTDOOR PRODUCTS

WE ALL SHARE THE SAME issues getting our gear—guns, targets, tape and staplers, ammunition, spare magazines, spotting scopes, hearing protection and tools—back and forth to the range. Like you, I've seen a wide variety of transport methods used by folks over the years, from the plastic shopping bag they bought the ammo in to some pretty high end custom leather cases.

Given the choice, I think we all want something that will protect and organize our gear while offering a reasonable balance be-

tween quality and affordability, and if you're like me, Plano Outdoor Products might have just what you need.

THE PLANO RANGE BAGS

Recently, I received two X2 Range Bags from Plano Outdoor Products to test, one for their smaller .30 caliber sized ammo can and one for their .50 caliber sized ammo can.

The Range Bag is a sturdy nylon bag that fits around the ammo can and provides a number of pouches and storage options for you to add additional tools, spare mags, or even a pistol. The bags attach securely over the hinge and latch portions of the ammo

can so that you can still carry the whole rig by the ammo cans handle. They also come with a detachable padded nylon shoulder strap that's handy when you're trying to juggle multiple cans or a rifle case as well.

Plano's ammo cans are a nice alternative to GI steel ammo cans. They're made of a sturdy plastic much lighter than steel, and are fitted with a brass latch and rubber o-ring seal that make them very weather resistant and rust proof. They're also designed to be stackable if you plan on using them for storage rather than in conjunction with the Range Bag.

They come in sizes that approximate the GI .30 and .50 caliber cans. I was able to fit 20 boxes of 9mm ammo in the larger can without issue. The can was heavy, but the handle and shoulder strap supported the weight with no problems.

The larger can also features a compartment on the lid with a handy place to store pens, screwdrivers or other small tools or parts. The smaller can worked similarly to a typical .30 caliber can for storage space.

Adding the X2 Range Bag to either can increases storage space and versatility. The larger can's bag features an oversized pocket with a hard-sided plastic pistol case that's plenty big to hold my full sized



The author had a chance to check out the ultra-sturdy mil-spec double rifle version of the Field Locker. It was one of the most rugged airline capable cases he'd seen.

Beretta M9A1 with laser/light combo attached with room to spare.

The outer portion of the bag has MOLLE webbing as well so that you can attach magazine pouches, a multi-tool pouch or other accessories as needed. There is also a large end pocket on one side of the bag that accommodated my gunsmithing screwdriver set, and a set of magazine pouches or small tool pouches on the other end. A mesh pocket is opposite of the pistol case pouch on the other side of the can.

Plano makes two versions of the smaller X2 bag for the .30 caliber cans. One has a padded pistol pouch built in with magazine pouches on the side, and the other, which I tested, has a padded pouch. Both models feature additional magazine pouches on one end of the bag and a larger utility pouch on the other end.

THE PLANO FIELD LOCKER

Plano also has a new line of heavy-duty gun cases they call Field Lockers, and they're impressive. They make a variety of models for both rifles and handguns, and they sent me one of the mil-spec double-rifle cases to check out. It's impressive.

My dad was an aircraft mechanic, so we travelled quite a bit. Later I worked in air transportation in the Air Force Reserve, and did four years working at an International Airport as a police officer where I often had to inspect firearms being shipped in checked baggage. I've seen a lot of gun travel cases come and go over the years, and the Field Locker is one of the most impressive. It's built like a tank!

It's constructed of a very heavy-duty polymer with large sturdy hinges, a set of four



Plano Outdoor Products offers their rugged Field Locker cases in both pistol and rifle models.

wide latches and four metal-reinforced padlock gates, as well as a watertight o-ring seal. The handles on the case are also comfortable and overbuilt for durability, and a set of wheels has been added to help make trips through the airport easier.

The interior is fitted with cut-to-fit foam and will accommodate two rifles with optics. There's even a release valve on the case to relieve any pressure caused by altitude or extreme temperatures. They're also TSA-approved for transporting firearms.

While the case is obviously designed to accommodate airline travel, it would work equally well protecting your rifles or shotguns for more routine local hunting excursion and trips to the range.

Both the Range Bag and Field Locker from Plano Outdoor Products show attention

to detail and a good understanding of what the shooter needs. They're also priced very reasonably in my opinion. The Range Bags, which include the ammo cans, run in the \$30 to \$50 range, and the Field lockers are priced from around \$80 to \$200, depending on the model you choose.

If you're in the market for new ways to transport your gear to your favorite hunting or shooting location, whether it's over land or through the air, then I'd definitely recommend checking out what Plano has to offer. **GW**

CONTACT

Plano Outdoor Products
PlanoSynergy.com



Note that the weight of this lightweight Hi-Power unloaded is 25.2 ounces compared to 32 ounces for a standard unloaded Hi-Power.

LIGHTWEIGHT Hi-Power?

Question: I saw a reference to a “Lightweight Browning Hi-Power” recently. I’ve owned two Browning Hi-Powers and have always liked them but have never heard of a “lightweight” version. Do these exist, and if so, who uses them?

Anthony A., New Orleans, LA

Leroy Thompson Answers: FN did, indeed, produce a lightweight version of the Hi-Power with an alloy frame. Most references I’ve seen state that they were made during the 1970s for the Belgian Gendarmerie Nationale, which was incorporated into the Belgian Police in 2001. A Belgian contact told me that they were intended for motorcycle riders, but I have also seen references to them being used by plain clothes Gendarmes.

It is likely that both groups used the lighter weapons. Reportedly, thousands were manufactured—I have most often seen reference to 5,000. They were only issued for a few years, as they did not hold up well to NATO 9x19mm loadings. Some examples have been imported into the USA, but they are not often encountered. Wayne Novak, who builds custom Hi-Powers, has had some of the alloy frame guns and used them for custom carry guns. **GW**

Our January Expert:

Leroy Thompson

is an internationally recognized authority on weapons and tactics, and is the author of more than 50 books.



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THE RIGHT-PRICED PATRIOT

WITH ITS AFFORDABLE,
FEATURE-LOADED
PATRIOT, MOSSBERG
UPS ITS GAME IN THE
BOLT-ACTION HUNTING
RIFLE MARKET.



This standard Patriot, chambered in 25-06 Rem., is just one of some 60-odd versions of the Patriot designed for everything from sniping varmints to downing big game in Africa.



► TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MIKE DICKERSON

IN THE 2000 MOVIE, *The Patriot*, rebellious colonists were advised to “aim small, miss small” when shooting at the British. Mossberg appears poised to turn that phrase on its head by aiming big, and scoring big, with its new Patriot bolt-action rifle.

Mossberg is perhaps best known for its pump-action shotguns—most notably the ubiquitous 500 series—but the company has not always been the first to come to mind when the conversation turns to bolt-action rifles.

It’s not that the company didn’t make any. Previous bolt-action models included the ATR and 4X4 models. The rifles were lumped by some into that category somewhat condescendingly referred to as “inexpensive rifles,” with all that implies, and their aesthetics didn’t exactly excite those who prefer their rifles in a more classic configuration.

Mossberg set out to change that last year when

it introduced its new Patriot flagship bolt-action rifle line in spectacular fashion with some 60 different variants of the rifle. Most new rifles start out with one or two models and the line expands over time, but Mossberg unveiled their entire lineup all at once. I don’t believe I’ve ever seen a more extensive line of rifles introduced at the same time.

The standard Patriot is, wonder of wonders, a classically styled rifle. At first glance, the rifle’s stock bears a strong resemblance to the instantly recognizable classic Winchester Model 70 stock, and that is not a bad thing. There are far worse designs one could choose to emulate.

At the range, our test rifle, a standard walnut-stocked Patriot, prompted more than one conversation that went like this:

“That’s a nice-looking rifle. What is it?”

“A Mossberg.”

“Really?”



The author praised the clean, classic lines of the Patriot's stock, which is somewhat reminiscent of the Winchester Model 70.



A streamlined bolt handle with a knurled knob provides plenty of clearance when mounting scopes.

COVERING THE BASES

The Patriot was introduced with a host of options. In addition to the walnut-stocked Patriot, there were models covering every stock preference, including laminate and black synthetic. Short-action caliber choices included 22-250 Rem., 243 Rem., 7mm-08 Rem. and 308 Win.

Available long-action calibers include 25-06 Rem., 270 Win., 30-06 Springfield, 7 mm Rem. Mag., 300 Win. Mag., 338 Win. Mag. and, in a first for Mossberg, 375 Ruger.

In addition to the basic Patriot rifle, there are "Deer Thug" models that sport a Mossy Oak Break-Up Infinity camo pattern on the synthetic stock and a wide range of Patriot Youth models. There are Patriot Night Train models with black or olive drab green synthetic stocks. A couple of these come with suppressor-ready threaded barrels with removable muzzlebrakes and a neoprene cheek-raising kit with interchangeable inserts. Newer additions to the line are rifles with synthetic stocks sporting the popular

*"MOSSBERG'S
ATTENTION TO DETAIL
WITH THE PATRIOT
SOMEWHAT
SURPRISED ME."*

The Patriot has a 22-in. fluted, sporter-weight barrel with a recessed target crown.



The Patriot has an attractive spiral-fluted bolt – a feature normally found only on more expensive rifles.

Kryptek Highlander camo pattern.

Mossberg also sells the Patriot in a scoped combo package with the Vortex Crossfire II 3-9X40mm scope with a BDC (ballistic drop compensator) reticle, and Patriot Youth models are available in a scoped combo package as well.

Mossberg clearly set out to cover all the bases with the Patriot, and the lineup pretty much does so. Whether you're sniping varmints or busting big game in Africa, there's seemingly a Patriot for every use and for shooters of all statures.

It took a while to get my hands on a rifle for testing, but that was partly because I was willing to wait for something a bit out of the ordinary. As you might expect, most new rifles rolling out of factories are chambered for the most popular cartridges, such as 30-06 Rem., so I was intrigued when Mossberg's Linda Powell offered me a chance to test one of the rifles chambered in 25-06 Rem. Actually, it would be more accurate to say I jumped at the opportunity. I have an inordi-

nate fondness for rifles in quarter-bore chamberings, so I was eager to test this one. I'll let you know how it performed, but first, here's a closer look at the standard Patriot.

NOT YOUR DADDY'S MOSSBERG

The Patriot's good looks are enhanced by the clean, classic lines of the stock, but closer inspection reveals there's a lot more to like in this gun than you would expect in a rifle in the Patriot's price range. Collectively, they add up to a package that is, in an aesthetic sense, head-and-shoulders above predecessor Mossberg bolt-action rifles.

Simply stated, this is a good-looking rifle, especially to those of us who have some pretty strong ideas of what a bolt-action hunting rifle should look like.

It starts with the classic lines of the Winchester 70-ish stock, which has a single crossbolt, for added strength, located just forward of the magazine. The grip and forend are not checkered, but have a dark stippling

pattern in those areas which contrasts nicely with the satin-finished walnut stock. The stippling also runs along the underside of the forend, providing an enhanced gripping surface in inclement weather. A raised cheekpiece on the stock provides a comfortable cheek weld, and a generously sized rubber recoil pad does a decent job of reducing recoil. Sling swivel studs are in place fore and aft.

The sporter-weight, 22-inch barrel is fluted over its front half and has a recessed target crown. While the barrel wasn't perfectly centered in the stock, it was truly free-floated along its entire length.

One thing that jumps out at you when you pick up this rifle is its attractive, spiral-fluted bolt, which is attached to a streamlined bolt handle that provides plenty of clearance for scope mounting. In use, the bolt cycled cleanly, and rounds fed and ejected without issue.

Given the traditional styling of this rifle, I personally would have preferred a box mag-



This view shows the detachable magazine and its recessed locking latch.



The tested rifle, in 25-06 Rem., employs a five-round detachable polymer magazine.

azine with a hinged metal floorplate, but detachable polymer magazines are all the rage these days, and that's the direction Mossberg took with the Patriot. Call me a curmudgeon, but I am not a fan of many detachable polymer magazine designs. Mr. Murphy often quietly accompanies us on hunts, and one of his favorite tricks is to snag the latch on a detachable magazine and dump it in the dirt at the most inopportune times.

The Patriot's magazine seems tough enough, and it functioned without issue throughout testing. The locking latch is somewhat recessed and protected, but I would still take care when moving through thick brush to not accidentally snag and trip the latch.

I also prefer trigger guards and bottom metal on my rifles to be made of, well, metal. It's all polymer on the Patriot. That's a necessary evil if you're trying to make a rifle that's affordable for the masses, and I can live with that. At least these components on the Patriot appear to be replaceable should you break something. If you were to break a trigger guard on some rifles in this price category, you would have to replace the entire stock.

While the patriot is pillar-bedded, it incorporates an interesting twist with a one-piece magazine well/polymer insert with tabs extending toward both the front and rear of the

RESULTS FOR THE MOSSBERG PATRIOT IN 25-06 REM.

LOAD	AVG. MUZZLE VELOCITY (FPS)	AVG. 100-YARD GROUP (INCHES)	BEST 100-YARD GROUP (INCHES)
Barnes Vor-Tx 100 gr. Tipped TSX BT	3144	1.10	0.87
Federal Premium 85 gr. Ballistic Tip	3506	1.30	0.96
Federal Premium 100 gr. Trophy Copper	3208	1.28	0.81
Federal Premium 115 gr. Nosler Partition	3033	2.72	2.12
Hornady Superformance 90 gr. GMX	3150	1.24	0.91
Hornady American Whitetail 117 gr. InterLock	2819	1.37	0.91
Hornady Superformance 117 gr. SST	2930	2.25	1.95

Note: Velocities measured with Competitive Edge Dynamics M2 chronograph. All groups fired in wind at 2-8 mph.

rifle. The trigger guard screws run through these tabs, and the action compresses against them when the screws are tightened to a factory-specified torque of 25 in-lbs.

In addition to features normally found only on more expensive rifles, like the fluted barrel and spiral-fluted bolt, Mossberg's attention to detail with the Patriot somewhat surprised me. The bolt handle knob, for example, is knurled for a sure grip. So is the bolt release button.

The safety is a simple two-position design, located just to the right of the bolt shroud and behind the bolt handle. It's worth noting that it does not lock the bolt handle in place when engaged. You can still cycle rounds to load and unload the rifle with the safety in the on position.

The trigger on the Patriot is reminiscent of the Savage AccuTrigger by virtue of its use of a bladed trigger. Mossberg calls their version the Lightning Bolt Action (LBA) trigger. It's user-adjustable to a range of approximately 2-7 lbs. The trigger on our test rifle broke at an average of 2 lbs. 4 oz. on my Lyman trigger gauge, so I left it at the factory setting for testing.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about these feature-laden rifles is their prices. Basic Patriot rifles, scoped combos, Deer Thug

scoped combos and the youth rifles have MSRPs in the \$386-\$584 range. Patriot Vortex Optics scoped combos are priced at \$552, while the Patriot Night Train models go for \$634 to \$811.

At these reasonable prices, the only real question left for many potential buyers is: How does it shoot?

RANGE RESULTS

For testing, I mounted a Leupold Mark 4 4.5-14x50mm scope with a 30mm tube. The Patriot came with a Weaver-style scope base, but I elected to use a set of 30mm lightweight one-piece rings from Talley to ensure a rock-solid setup for testing. Medium-height Talleys provided just enough clearance for the scope's large, 50mm objective lens and good clearance for the bolt handle.

I expected a bit of velocity loss from the Patriot's 22-inch barrel, but there wasn't enough to make much difference with one factory load from Barnes and three Federal Premium loads. Federal's 115-grain Nosler Partition load actually clocked in at three fps faster than factory-stated velocity over my Competitive Edge Dynamics M2 chronograph, while the Barnes 100-grain TTSX load ran 81 fps under the factory benchmark.

Velocity loss was more pronounced with

the three Hornady loads, but that was to be expected because the Hornady loads are tested at their factory with 24-inch barrels. Out of the shorter barrel, velocities for the three loads were 171-200 fps slower than factory-stated speeds.

Accuracy testing with seven different factory loads yielded mixed results, with the rifle turning in a mediocre performance with a couple of factory loads. Interestingly enough, both of the worst performers used bullets at the heavier end of the spectrum—115 grains and 117 grains, respectively—and both turned in average 100-yard groups in excess of 2.25 inches.

Only one of the tested loads using heavier bullets—Hornady's American Whitetail round with 117-grain InterLock bullets—turned in what I would consider to be a good performance. Groups averaged 1.37 inches, with a best group of 0.91 inches.

If you throw out the two loads that didn't perform well in the Patriot, average group sizes for the five remaining factory loads varied from 1.10 to 1.37 inches. All five of those loads produced sub-MOA best groups measuring a little less than an inch. Bullet weights for these loads ranged from 85 grains for the Federal Ballistic Tip load to 117 grains for the Hornady American Whitetail load.



A simple, two-position safety allows you to work the bolt to load and unload the rifle with the safety engaged.

The rifle did show a certain fondness for copper bullets. Federal's 100-grain Trophy Copper load produced the best single group, measuring 0.81 inches, while Barnes' 100-grain TTSX load was close behind with a best group of 0.87 in.

Overall, the rifle did not deliver the kind of tack-driving accuracy I like out of my quarter-bore rifles, but that level of accuracy typically comes at a fairly steep price. With ammo it likes, the Patriot delivered groups ranging from slightly less than one MOA to less than 1-½ MOA, and that's all the accuracy you'll ever need for most hunting applications. The rifle looks pretty attractive at the range and in the field, and with an MSRP of just \$438 for the tested model, the Patriot represents a real bargain for the hunter on a budget. **GW**



The author put the Patriot through its paces with seven different factory loads.



SPECIFICATIONS

Mossberg Patriot Rifle

Action: Bolt action
Caliber: 25-06 Rem. as tested
Barrel: 22-in. fluted, sporter weight
Stock: Walnut
Finish: Blued
Trigger: LBA adjustable
Sights: None, Weaver-style bases
Capacity: 5-round detachable magazine
Weight: 7 lbs.

MSRP: \$438.00

THE RIGHT-PRICED PATRIOT

CONTACT

Barnes Ammunition
BarnesBullets.com

Competitive Edge Dynamics
CEDhk.com

Federal Ammunition
FederalPremium.com

Hornady Ammunition
Hornady.com

Leupold Optics
Leupold.com

Mossberg
Mossberg.com

Nagel's Gun Shop
NagelsGuns.net

Talley Manufacturing
TalleyManufacturing.com

Next-Gen FIREPOWER

SIG SAUER EXCELLENCE SHOWS UP AGAIN
WITH THE **NEW MPX-P**



The new SIG MPX-P pistol boasts many of the latest technological innovations, and has fully ambidextrous controls for the bolt release, magazine release, and the fire selector.





► TEXT AND PHOTOS BY GARRETT LUCAS

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DECADES, a handful of companies have dominated the submachine gun field, and this short list certainly includes H&K and their popular MP5 line. Known the world over for its reliability and accuracy, just about every agency has armed itself with those rock-solid firearms, and the model has become a classic.

But even though MP5s continue to be picked up by some agencies—even on a second-hand basis—and frequently trade hands between enthusiasts, the model line doesn't have all the modern amenities we've become used to, especially all the rail space we need for optics, lasers, lights, and so forth. Additionally, more advanced operating systems have been developed to work reliably with various types of modern ammunition, and lighter materials have been employed to carry weight.

From this angle we can see the hand-stop on the bottom rail, and we get a good perspective on how far the 30-round magazine protrudes. For easier mobility and concealability, 10 and 20-round magazines are available.



Recently, SIG Sauer has stepped in to help fill some of the submachine gun void with their new MPX line of products, and it seems to have struck a chord with the public and with myself as well. The first time I pulled the MPX-P out of the box, it felt good in the hand, and it looked good as well. It's quite apparent the latest technological innovations have been used to put together this masterpiece of engineering, and it looks like it had more than one or two industrial designers to make such a beautiful weapon.

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

The SIG MPX-P is the civilian version of their new line of MPX short-barreled and fully automatic weapons. Because of the current rules set forth by our government, civilians can't put a stock on something with less than a 16-inch barrel, unless they pay an exorbitant tax to the BATFE for the ability to

exercise what should be a fundamental right to begin with. The same goes for fully automatic weapons. You must pay for the privilege of exercising your right with those types of weapons as well. To me, it's the Second Amendment equivalent of a poll tax.

The build quality and finish of the MPX-P is fantastic. It's solidly constructed, has an ergonomic design, and was 100% reliable during the time I had it for review. The operating system is a closed, fully locked short stroke gas-piston mechanism, which is an additional safety measure for the user.

The pistol is semi-automatic only for the general public. The forend is an aluminum rail with a rail-adaptable handguard that's comfortable to hold, while still offering plenty of options to add accessories by adding two-inch Picatinny rails to the forend. The MPX-P came with three two-inch Picatinny rails in the box.

Several of the MPX-P's controls are similar to AR-style platforms, including the safety selector, bolt release and magazine release, all of which are ambidextrous. Additionally, the MPX-P sports a charging handle similar to those found on AR-type firearms, and it has a monolithic receiver with an integrated M1913 rail (Picatinny) in the 12 o'clock position.

Lacking the stock found on similar models, the weight is only five pounds with an empty magazine. Speaking of which, the magazines are made by Lancer Systems, come with steel lips, and are available in 10, 20 or 30-round capacities. The overall length of the MPX-P is 16.85 inches with a barrel length of 8 inches. An additional bonus is that the MPX submachine guns are built to allow the user to change the barrel length and stock type in the field.

Also in the package from SIG was a semi-



The rail is a very comfortable design that allows the attachment of 2-inch Picatinny rails to add accessories. There is also a hand stop on the 6 o'clock segment to help protect the hand from the front of the barrel.



“THE SIG MPX-P IS THE CIVILIAN VERSION OF THEIR NEW LINE OF SHORT-BARRELED AND FULLY AUTOMATIC WEAPONS.”

flexible single-point sling with a push-button QD attachment to insert at the rear end of the pistol. And, there was one magazine in the box. To their credit SIG includes a coupon that allows the purchaser to buy a few more mags at once to save some money, but for a high-end weapon like this, I honestly believe two magazines should be the minimum sent out from the factory.

HANDLING

For what it is—a very large and heavy semi-automatic pistol—it handles pretty well. I liked the feel of the rounded grip as opposed to some of the standard AR grips, and the comfortable, rail-adaptable handguards that make handling the forend more comfortable than a typical quad rail. It also has a hand stop at the end of the rail to help prevent the user from getting their hand around the end of the barrel.

The MPX-P has flip-up iron sights that are nicely built, and different aperture sizes are available on the rear sight for more precise shot placement. However, a weapon of this type just begs to have some sort of optic on it, so I chose to install the Lucid M7 Micro Dot sight to make acquiring the target a bit easier, and to more accurately assess the pistol's accuracy.

Now, I believe that the MPX-P is missing a couple of things that would make it a truly effective and practical weapon. Since there is no stock, it's tough to get a stable sight picture. Without it, the user is awkwardly holding five pounds of weaponry with two hands, while trying to both stabilize the pistol and get a good sight picture at the same time. Though the single-point stabilizing sling helps a good deal, it's still not an optimal set-up for firing accurately.

Also, the eight-inch barrel doesn't really

add a lot over a standard pistol barrel. From the research I've done, you don't really get the majority of peak velocity unless you're at 12 to 14 inches of barrel length. There are exceptions, of course, but I'm just speaking as a general rule of thumb. If this was a fully automatic pistol, that's a little different; with a rate of fire of 850 rounds per minute, you could dump 14 rounds into a target in one second. But, we knew all these things going into the review, so the shooting evaluation is based on what it is, and not what it could be.

MPX-P ON THE LINE

Right off the bat, the trigger pull felt gritty and heavy. After the second magazine was finished, the grittiness started to go away and things started smoothing out for us. After 300 rounds were sent downrange, the trigger pull was still a stout 7 pounds at the midpoint of the trigger. I would assume the

**Federal 115 Gr. JHP +P+
(9PBLE) @ 25 yards
from bench with Lucid M7
Micro Dot**



After testing various loads in multiple rounds of 5-shot groups, the best group for the day was 1.25 inches by Federal's JHP +P+ (9PBLE) from the author's personal stash.

heavier trigger is a consequence of the original MPX being a submachine gun, and you wouldn't want a hair-trigger on one of those.

The first 120 rounds were used to break in the MPX-P and to plink around a bit. I hadn't used HPR Ammunition before, but they supplied the bulk of the ammo for this review, and I was pleasantly surprised by the results. The 115-grain 9mm JHP loads were clean shooting, and were in the same field with the premium, higher-priced ammunition when it came to accuracy. At \$30 for a 50-round box, it's hard to beat.

Speaking of accuracy, I tested the MPX-P with several high-end rounds including 124-grain Federal Hydra-Shok, 115-grain Hornady FTX Critical Defense, Federal 115-grain JHP +P+ (9PBLE), Black Hills 124-grain JHP +P, and the HPR 124-grain JHP loads. For the accuracy testing, I shot from the bench at 25 yards with the Lucid M7 Micro Dot attached, which made it much easier for me to ensure I was keeping the same hold between shots.



The MPX-P has familiar, AR-style controls as well as a few ergonomic touches such as the handle with the palm swell and the lower trigger guard being offset for use by gloved hands.

As with the opening session of break-in shooting, all of the various brands and loads fed perfectly, with approximately 350 rounds fired in total. Running five-shot groups during the testing, the average group size was 3.04 inches, and the best group of the day was brought home by the Federal 115-grain +P+ JHP at a 1.25-inch spread, with the HPR 115-grain JHP following closely in second with a spread of 1.375 inches.

In fact, almost all the loads got close to those numbers at one time or another with the large number of groups fired, though those groups weren't the norm. Using the Lucid M7 Micro Dot helped immensely, but I can still only see so well at 25 yards without magnification. And, while I understand the MPX line is made for combat, the heavy trigger pull didn't help in terms of getting tight groups.

THE MPX LETS ITS HAIR DOWN

I still had a decent amount of HPR ammunition left over, so I took the MPX off the bench, attached the single-point sling, and went to work off-hand on a Thompson Target B34 STOP target. Still at 25 yards, I pushed the pistol out until I met resistance from the sling. That helped stabilize things, and I shot 20 more rounds—5 in the head and 15 in the chest.

With the M7 sight, I had a fairly easy time staying on target and getting pretty decent shots. I didn't get target-match groups, but all of the rounds hit critical areas, and any one or two of them would've put the threat down.

VELOCITY DATA

With the eight-inch barrel involved with the shooting exercise, it's only right to wonder how much of a bump the 9mm gets with the extra barrel length. It wasn't a very dramatic increase, which was what I believed at the beginning of the exercise. Here are the average results of different loads' velocity at 10 feet (see top right):

RESULTS

Federal 124 Gr. Hydra-Shok	1192 fps
Hornady 115 Gr. Critical Defense	1234 fps
HPR 124 Gr. JHP	1107 fps
Black Hills 124 Gr. JHP +P	1298 fps
Federal 115 Gr. JHP +P+ (9PBLE)	1397 fps



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SAFETY NOTE: Always wear ear and eye protection when shooting firearms.
(Images shown are for marketing purposes only and are not intended as safe firearm handling examples.)



The 33-round magazine is made by Lancer Systems. It feels very solid and has metal feed lips that will last longer and not spread apart.



There came a moment to have some fun, and by utilizing the sling as a stabilizer and with the aid of the Lucid M7, 20 rounds of the HPR 115-grain JHPs all found their way to the critical zones of the B34 Thompson STOP target—from 25 yards.

“WITH REGARD TO DESIGN AND FUNCTIONALITY, THIS IS ONE OF THE BETTER PIECES TO COME ALONG IN A WHILE. EVEN THE MAGAZINES LOOK SOLID AND PRECISELY BUILT.”

It seems to me that a barrel at least 12 inches long is needed to pull the most velocity out of the various 9mm loads you’ll find on the market. Without the advantage of full-auto fire, the eight-inch barrel provides only a slight enhancement of speed versus a four-inch barrel.

FINAL THOUGHTS

So, what’s the verdict? I have to say that I’m a little conflicted. Because of the superb build quality, great ergonomics, utter reli-

bility, and the familiarity of AR-style controls, I really want one. With regard to design and functionality, this is one of the better pieces to come along in a while. Even the magazines look solid and precisely built.

But, from a purely practical standpoint, and thinking like a survivalist (or prepper, if you prefer that term), I have to ask myself what role this particular pistol would play as part of my overall plan. I have pistols that come with 33-round magazines and make a much more portable and concealable pack-

age. I don’t lose much with optics, because there of plenty of adapters or gunsmiths available to fit a red-dot sight on a semi-automatic pistol, and the velocity from an eight-inch barrel isn’t tremendously better than from a four-inch barrel.

However, as it sits, the MPX-P is bursting with potential. If one were to take the time to deal with the BATFE, pay the expense to add a folding stock and make it a short-barreled rifle, this would be an excellent low-recoil weapon to move around the house with



Even though the MPX-P comes with nice flip-up iron sights, the 12 o'clock rail is considered a must-have on today's combat weapons for the addition of optics for faster target acquisition.



The rear sight is adjustable for windage, and offers different aperture sizes to adjust the precision of the shots. The charging handle is the same type found on AR-style weapons, making this part of the system familiar. Additionally, there's a mounting spot on the back to attach a stock if one were to legally convert this to a short-barreled rifle.

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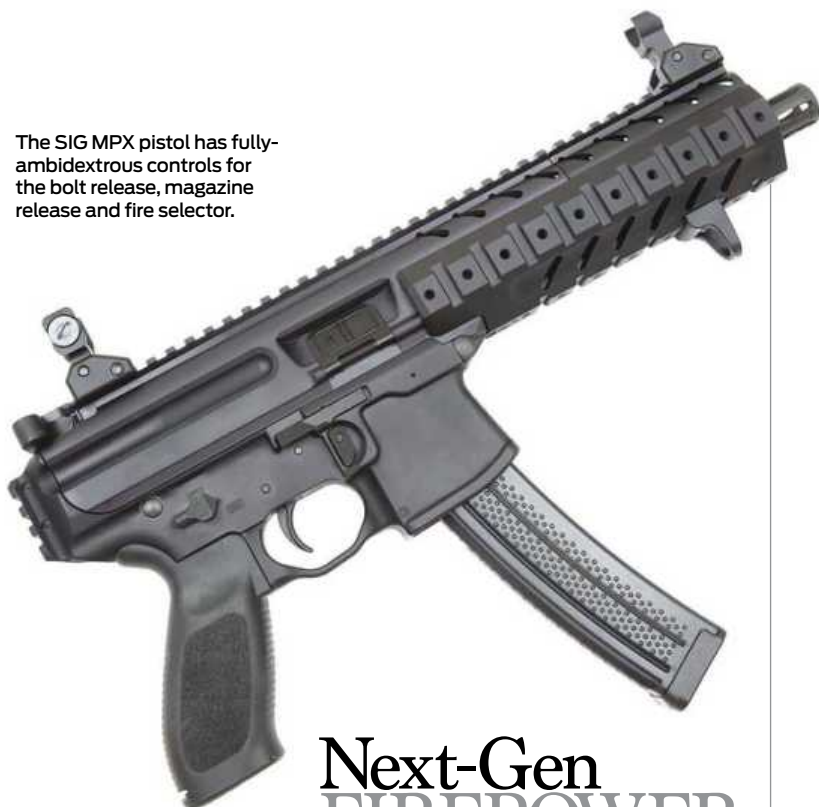
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The SIG MPX pistol has fully-ambidextrous controls for the bolt release, magazine release and fire selector.



Next-Gen FIREPOWER



The stabilizing sling and the Lucid M7 Micro Dot made a great combination for acquiring the target and staying on it. Utilizing the hand-stop to keep resistance on the sling helps reduce fatigue since the user doesn't have to constantly keep a tight grip on the forend.

to defend your family, or keep in your vehicle in case everything goes sideways. It would even make a fairly light weapon to keep with you when you need to conserve weight as you're bugging out on the trail.

So, really, the decision is up to you. Are you a totally practical person, or do you like to treat yourself from time to time? If you accept the fact that, right now, it's a bulky, five-pound pistol with excellent design features and superb functionality, then you won't be disappointed in the least. In fact, you'll love everything about it. **GW**

CONTACT

SIG SAUER, Inc.
(603) 610-3000
SIGSauer.com

Lucid
(307) 840-2160
MyLucidGear.com

SPECIFICATIONS

SIG Sauer MPX-P

Caliber: 9mm
Action: Semi-automatic
Rails: Aluminum, mono
System: Closed, fully locked short-stroke, gas piston
Weight: 5.0 pounds
Length: 16.85 inches
Twist: 1 in 10 rifling
Barrel: 8 inches
Trigger Pull: 7.6 pounds
Capacity: 10/20/30-round magazine

MSRP: \$1,576

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MSRP: \$229

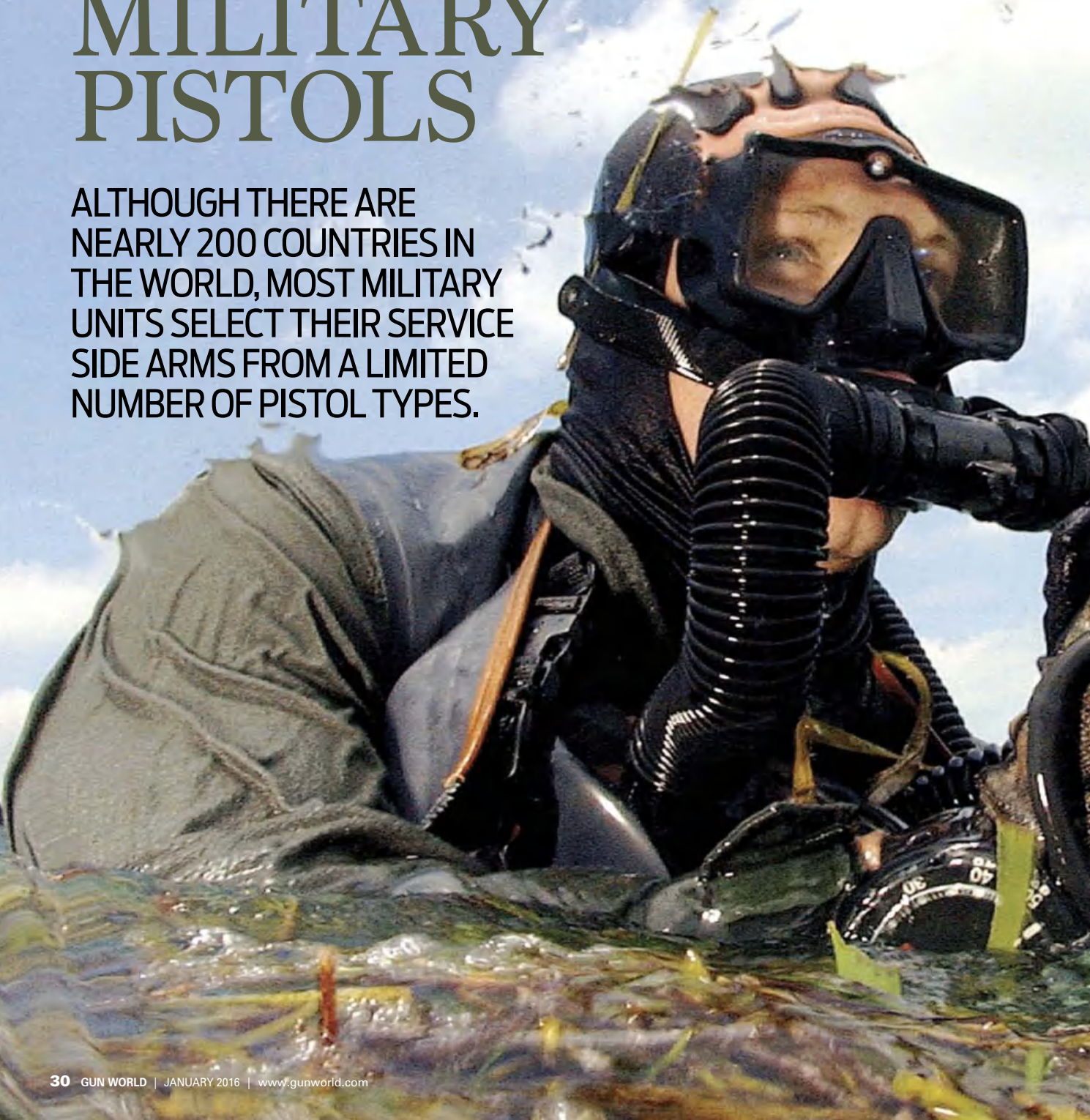



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Today's TOP 5 MILITARY PISTOLS

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE
NEARLY 200 COUNTRIES IN
THE WORLD, MOST MILITARY
UNITS SELECT THEIR SERVICE
SIDE ARMS FROM A LIMITED
NUMBER OF PISTOL TYPES.





► TEXT AND PHOTOS BY LEROY THOMPSON

SINCE THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY, the military pistol has retained its traditional roles as a self-protection weapon, a mark of authority for officers, and an arm for support troops. In recent years, however, its role has broadened for several reasons, including the continued rise of global terrorism and insurrection.

The growing need for military units capable of engaging in hostage rescue missions or other raids has provided the impetus for the increased use of, and training with, the pistol. When carrying out ship or oil platform assaults, for example, combat swimmers may choose the pistol over their slung carbine or SMG because they need at least one or both hands free while rappelling or climbing. The pistol will also often be chosen for tubular assaults (such as in an aircraft cabin) where conditions are cramped.

Pilots flying in combat zones also arm themselves with pistols in case their aircraft goes down, and although some attempts have been made to replace the pistols carried by pilots, armored crewmen, and support troops with a PDW (Personal Defense Weapon) such as the FN P90, the pistol remains in wide usage.

Intelligence or special ops personnel working undercover within a combat zone may also rely on the pistol, which may be easily concealed. Military protective teams will also rely heavily on the pistol since it can be readily concealed.

Even while serving on “Hearts & Minds” type campaigns to aid locals in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere, troops must remain armed to counter assassination or kidnapping attempts. Service men and women will often retain a rifle or carbine when it’s practical, but their pistol must be a constant companion.

A U.S. Navy SEAL
breaks water with
his U.S. Navy model
P226 at the ready.
(USN)



M9 as used by the U.S. armed forces for the last 30 years.

COUNTRIES AND CALIBERS

There are currently 196 countries in the world, the vast majority of which have some form of armed forces. In a few of the remaining 20-30 nations, the police serve that de facto function. But no matter the exact number, it is noteworthy that there are a limited number of pistol types used by all of these countries. This has arisen at least partially because of the loss of domestic arms producers in most countries. Also noteworthy is the limited number of cartridges for which current military pistols are chambered.

Five cartridges dominate in today's military pistols: 9x19mm, .45 ACP, 9x18 Makarov, 7.62x25mm Tokarev, and 5.7x28mm. There are a few others cartridges that still see limited military use, including the .40 S&W and 9x17mm, but they are rarely encountered.

Likewise, the choice of military pistols has become much less diverse, as countries

without a large domestic civilian market for pistols no longer opt for a domestically produced weapon.

In discussing the most widely used military pistols today, I will consider the fact that countries with the largest armed forces will use large numbers of the pistol they issue, but I will also consider the number of countries—large and small—that use a certain pistol. Based on these criteria, the following are today's top military pistols. The list begins with a pair of pistols that have nearly 200 years of service between them, yet are still widely used.

FN/BROWNING HI-POWER

One indication of the Hi-Power's popularity among the world's armed forces is the number of names by which it has been known: GP (Grand Puissance), P35, BAP (Browning Automatic Pistol), and L9A1 (in British service), among others.

At its peak of popularity between the

1950s and 1980s, more than 80 countries issued the P35 to members of their armed forces. Four factors were most influential in the P35's popularity: high quality, 9x19mm chambering, magazine safety, and 13-round magazine capacity. Another sign of the P35's popularity is that, in addition to Belgium, other countries—including Argentina, Canada, India, Indonesia, and Israel—produced it. It has seen combat from World War II through the War on Terror, though many countries have now replaced the P35 with newer models. However, in many cases it remains in armories as a reserve weapon or is issued to support troops.

Some early versions of the Hi-Power were produced with rear tangent sights and a holster stock that allowed the shooter to use the pistol as a carbine. These include some pre-war Belgian pistols and some produced by Inglis during World War II. The latter were produced primarily for Nationalist Chinese forces.



The HK USP has proven popular with various armed forces including those of Germany and Spain.

The primary reason many military forces replace the P35 is the desire for a more modern double action or fast action pistol. In many cases, the P35 pistols, though very durable, were starting to show the wear of decades of use. Though some countries ordered newer production Hi-Power pistols, others switched to another design.

COLT 1911

The Colt 1911/1911A1 has been in military service for over a century and continues to be one of the best combat pistols in the world. Of course, its largest user was always the U.S. armed forces until its replacement by the M9 in the 1980s. Even after the advent of the M9, the 1911 still saw limited use in the USMC with MEUSOC (Marine Expeditionary Unit Special Operations Capable) .45 autos built on GI 1911/1911A1 frames.

Later, new 1911-type pistols were acquired for members of MARSOC special operations Marines from Kimber. More recently, the



M9 with the original style of holster, issued in desert camo.



Austrian Military Police carrying out entry training with Glock 17s. (Österreichisches Bundesheer)

Marine Corps has acquired the Colt M45A1 Close Quarter Battle Pistol for Special Operations Capable Marine units. At least some 1911-type pistols are in use with other U.S. special ops personnel.

Other users of the 1911 tended to be allies of the USA who received the pistols as military aid. Among these, the 1911 saw extensive use in the Philippines and South Korea. The pistols remain standard issue in the Philippines, including some produced by Armscor.

Argentina used them for many years, including examples manufactured in the country. Brazil also produced its own version, the M973, chambered in 9x19mm. Note IMBEL, the Brazilian arms producer, has also produced the pistol in .45 ACP. Some of the M973 pistols remain in reserve stocks.

Greece still issues the 1911A1. Originally, both 1911 and 1911A1 pistols were supplied to the Greek Army after World War II. It is unclear if they have acquired any newer 1911s or still use those produced prior to 1945. Although the locally produced Pindad version of the Browning Hi-Power is widely used by the Indonesian armed forces, the 1911 is still used as well, reportedly including a copy made by Pindad.



Although this .45 ACP SIG P220 was offered for the U.S. Joint Combat Pistol Trials, it was not adopted.

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A British soldier firing an L9A1 (Hi-Power) during training at Basra. (UK MOD)



*“THE COLT
1911/1911A1 HAS
BEEN IN MILITARY
SERVICE FOR OVER
A CENTURY...”*

The M1911 has been replaced in many armed forces by more modern high-capacity 9mm, double-action pistols. However, at least a few countries still retain the M1911 as a frontline or reserve pistol. The 1911's military popularity has suffered as a result of its heavy recoil, its complicated takedown system, which allows the loss of small parts, and its single-action, single-stack design. However, the proven man-stopping power of the .45 ACP cartridge still appeals to some users.

GLOCK

When the Glock pistol was first introduced in 1982, the only immediate customers were the Austrian armed forces. The “plastic” pistol and its fast action were too revolutionary for many military purchasers. There was also the valid fear that its design, with the safety within the trigger, would make it non-soldier-proof and result in numerous accidental discharges.

But as the Glock established itself over the next decade or so, its reliability and durability soon won over many military buyers. Add its reasonable cost and ease of maintenance (a Glock armorer can be trained in a day or less) and it is not surprising that the Glock continues to maintain a substantial portion of the world military handgun market.

The most popular Glock with military personnel has overwhelmingly been the Model 17. There are exceptions; for example, the Danish *Slædepatruljen Sirius*, an elite recon unit that patrols Arctic Greenland, is issued the Glock 20 in .45 ACP in case they encounter a polar bear. Some special ops units that have secondary missions where they work undercover or do close protection work may opt to have the Glock 19 or 26 available for increased concealability.

Quite a few countries have retained their previous service pistols but have purchased Glocks for their military police or special ops

personnel, and many military counterterrorist units are armed with Glocks. Among countries that issue them as a standard military weapon are Bangladesh, Finland, France (to various specialized units), India (specialized units), Iraq, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Yemen.

The British recently adopted the Glock as a replacement for the Browning Hi-Power based on experiences in Afghanistan where British troops had been attacked on bases and elsewhere. They wanted a pistol that was immediately ready for action without the need to remove a safety or when carried in condition three to chamber a round. The U.S. has purchased them for special operations personnel, especially those working alongside Afghan or Iraqi units who are also armed with Glocks.

Photos have also shown some Russian special units armed with Glocks. These may be



A US GI 1911A1 continued in U.S. service until it was replaced by the M9. Some in USMC armories were refurbished as MEUSOC pistols.

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some of the Glock 17s assembled by Izhmash in Russia.

All indications are that the Glock will continue to be popular among military users, and, as military budgets get tighter, the lower cost and long service life of the Glock will make it ever more appealing.

BERETTA M9/M92

When the U.S. adopted the Beretta 92 as the M9, it immediately became ranked among the most popular military pistols in quantity in service. However, we are not the only country to use a version of the M92. Among other armed forces that have adopted versions of the M92 are Italy, Colombia, Egypt (the Helwan 920, produced in Egypt), Jordan, Peru, Slovenia, Singapore, and Thailand.

France adopted the locally made PAMAS G1 for the French Army, Air Force, and Gendarmerie Nationale. Brazilian armed

forces use the Taurus PT-92, which is produced in Brazil, and the Turkish armed forces use the locally produced Yavuz-16. Among special operations units that use the M92 are the Pakistani SSG, Afghan Commandos (M9), Indonesian Army and Navy special forces, Albanian special forces, and Malaysian paratroops and special forces.

A more recent version of the M9 acquired by the USMC is the M9A1, which has an accessory rail, improved magazine, and other upgrades. Although the M9 remains in service and likely will for some time, the U.S. Army and Air Force have been interested in replacing the M9 with the Modular Handgun System (MHS), which is intended to allow the pistol to be configured for different missions and to fit different hand sizes. The caliber for the MHS has not been specified in bid specs, though there has been some interest in the .40 S&W round.



The Makarov PM remains in use in Russia as well as in former Soviet Republics and clients.

U.S. troops have had some complaints about the M9 during the War on Terror. The first was that magazines from a specific contractor proved unreliable in sandy environments (I.S. Iraq and Afghanistan), but new magazines have solved this issue. There have also been complaints about lack of stopping power. This is the reason the USMC still uses .45 ACP pistols and continues testing calibers other than 9x19mm for replacement of the M9.

But despite these complaints, the M9 continues to serve acceptably as a general issue pistol for U.S. troops.

SIG P226

To some extent the P226 (and similar pistols such as the P228) are included here because of quality not quantity, as many of the world's most elite military units continue to choose the P226.

For example, while the British armed forces have used the Browning Hi-Power and the Glock 17, the Special Air Service, Special Boat Service (SBS), and Special Reconnaissance Regiment use the P226. The standard P226 is designated the L105A1, while the corrosion resistant U.S. Navy version (used by the SEALs) is designated L106A1, pre-

sumably for use by the SBS. Some also use the P228, designated L107A1, because of greater concealment.

Likewise, the U.S. Navy SEALs have used the U.S. Navy model, currently the MK25. Among other elite units that use the P226 are France's GIGN anti-terrorist unit, Irish Army Ranger Wing, Japanese Special Boarding Unit, ROK Naval Special Warfare, Dutch UIM of the Royal Dutch Marines, Pakistan SSG, Polish GROM, and Turkish Special Forces Command, among others.

A few countries do issue the P226 as a standard military sidearm, including New



The U.S. Navy MK25 as used by the U.S. Navy SEALs.

“...NEW PISTOLS ARE CONSTANTLY BEING DEVELOPED, AND SOME OF THESE WILL EVENTUALLY BE ADOPTED.”

Estonian, and Lithuanian armed forces as well as various special operations units.

FN's Five-seveN pistol is used by various special operations units, who appreciate its range and its ability to penetrate body armor. It is also the current standard issue pistol of the Belgian Army and Air Force as well the Special Forces Group. In some countries, the Five-seveN was sold as a companion weapon for special operations forces equipped with the FN P90 SMG, also chambered for the 5.7x28mm cartridge.

Finally, the Makarov PM remains in use within the Russian armed forces and with the armed forces of many former Soviet Republics or client states.

Obviously, new pistols are constantly being developed, and some of these will eventually be adopted by world military units, perhaps to replace some of the pistols listed above.

However, purchasing new individual weapons to equip large numbers of soldiers, sailors, and airmen can be expensive, especially in sizable armed forces. And, though the pistol remains an important military weapon within its niche, it tends to rank as a low priority with most military officials. The exception is usually with special operations units and maybe the air forces, where the pistol has special tactical roles with the former and propinquity roles with the latter.

Some of the older Hi-Powers, 1911s, and Makarovs will probably be replaced over the next ten years. In Russia, for example, the MP-443 Grach will continue to replace the Makarov. It is also likely that the Glock will replace many of the older pistols in other countries as they are phased out. However, many of the pistols currently in military holsters will remain the ones in holsters a decade from now. **GW**

Zealand, Singapore, and Myanmar. The P226 is renowned for its accuracy and reliability, but it also costs more than other military pistols such as the Glock. As a result, many countries are not willing to spend the extra funds, but for elite special operations and anti-terrorist units, the funds are usually made available for the best equipment.

Note that the P228 is issued in the U.S. armed forces as the M11 to those needing a more compact, concealable handgun. These can include investigators such as the U.S. Army CID and USAF OSI, as well as pilots and some other personnel. The U.S. Coast

Guard issues the P229R DAK in .40 S&W, a weapon deemed more applicable to its law enforcement function.

It should also be mentioned that the original user of the P220 pistol, Switzerland, continues to use this single-stack 9x19mm pistol as the P75.

A FEW OTHERS

In addition to the pistols that are listed above, a few others may be added to the list fairly easily.

The HK USP is widely used as the standard issue weapon of the German, Spanish,

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WE8654	G5 Minute Adhesive	21.48

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KT102	Leather Sheath	14.50



CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
SS63909	Kit with Silver-Black	24.95
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SS63949	Kit with Black Ink Cocobolo	24.95
KT111	Leather Sheath	14.50



CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
SS63809	Kit with Silver-Black	24.95
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SS63849	Kit with Black Ink Cocobolo	24.95
KT111	Leather Sheath	14.50



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CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
SS776	Whitetail	39.95

Lynx



Opens to a full 7 1/8", measures 4 1/8" closed. Blade edge is 2 3/4". Nickel silver bolster, brass liner and pins. Requires drill bits #TD47 and #TD50.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
SS771	Lynx	34.95

Blackhawk



Overall length of 6" opened, 3 5/8" closed. Blade is 2 1/2" long. Nickel silver bolster, brass liner and pins. Requires drill bits #TD47 and #TD50.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
SS773	Blackhawk	34.95

Elk



Clip point lockback opens to 8 1/4" overall, 4 3/4" closed, blade edge is 3 1/4". Nickel silver bolster and stainless steel liner, brass tubing and pins. Requires drill bits #TD8, #TD31, #TD40 & #TD50.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
SS779	Elk	49.95

Walnut & Walnut Burl



Good contrast and grain. Color will vary from light to deep dark brown in each piece. Blocks are 1" x 1 1/2" x 5" long. Scales are matched sets, each piece measures 3/8" x 1 1/2" x 5" long. Sizes are approximate.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
EW116	Walnut Scale Set	4.95
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EW219	Supreme Walnut Block	19.50

Premium quality cutlery blades were designed especially with the professional Chef in mind. Made from super tough 8A stainless steel, flat ground to a Keen-Edge that stays sharp. Used as chef blades, cooks blades, paring knives, and steak blades. This set is perfect for any kitchen or camp. (Please note handle material and rivets are NOT supplied).

Chef's Blade



Light, well balanced, beautifully shaped, designed to be used often, this super tough and flexible blade has a Keen-Edge flat ground from 8A stainless. 12 1/2" overall with a full 8 3/4" cutting edge. Tang holes are 5/32" for 5/16" cutlery rivets or use 5/32" or smaller pins.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
SS107	8 3/4" Chef's Blade	18.95

Cook's Blade



One of the most used knives in the kitchen or camp is the cook's blade. Perfect for small chopping jobs, paring, cutting, slicing, a perfect all around camp knife. 10 1/2" overall with a 6" cutting edge, .078" thick blade is nicely tapered to the tip of the blade. Super tough 8A flat ground Keen-Edge stays sharp. 5/32" rivet holes for use with 5/16" cutlery rivets or 5/32" or smaller pins.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
SS106	6" Cook's Blade	16.95

Steak Blade



Perfect size for a steak or paring knife. Super tough 8A stainless blade is 7 1/2" overall, 3 1/2" cutting edge, .058" thick. A must for every kitchen and camp. Three tang holes are sized for 3/16" cutlery rivets or 1/8" or smaller pins.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
SS108	Steak Blade	10.95

Santoku Blade



The Japanese style Santoku Keen-Edge blade is perfect for cutting, chopping, slicing and dicing. Super tough 8A stainless blade. 10-3/4" overall, 6" blade, .070 thickness. Tang holes are 5/32" for 5/16" cutlery rivets or pins.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
SS110	Santoku Blade	18.95

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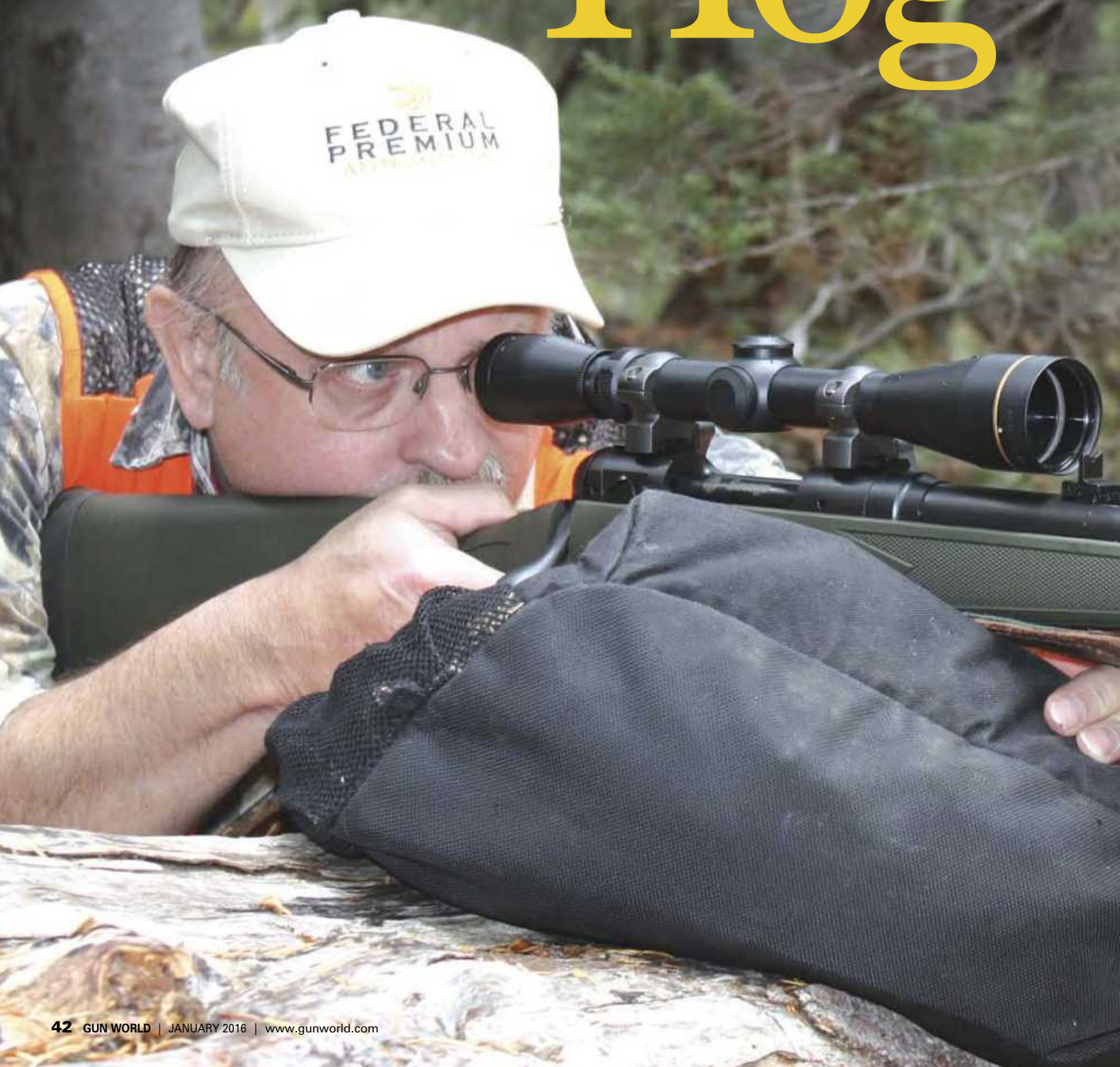


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High on the Hog



SAVAGE CHAMBERED ITS RUGGED HOG HUNTER BOLT-ACTION RIFLE IN .338 FEDERAL, AND IT'S AN IMPRESSIVE AND HIGHLY FUNCTIONAL COMBINATION

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY DAVE WORKMAN

RIGHT OUT OF THE BOX, you can tell that the Savage Hog Hunter—chambered for the potent .338 Federal cartridge—is the kind of rifle that will see lots of use far beyond the publicized intent of taking on monster wild hogs.

It's kind of a stubby, bulky-looking specimen that launches a .33-caliber bullet over 2,700 fps, depending upon the load and bullet weight—there's ample data for the cartridge—and even at more moderate speeds in the 2,500-2,600 fps range, it's a formidable big game stopper. After all, why should pork punchers have all the fun?

Let's talk about the rifle, and then the cartridge. Both are impressive, and the combination is terrific. It will take on elk, black bear, deer and other big game without so much as a hiccup.



The rugged Savage Model 11 Hog Hunter is now chambered for the .338 Federal, a round based on a necked-out .308 Winchester case. In the North American bush, it can handle just about anything that moves.



Author Workman was impressed with the test rifle's strong bolt action, and he slapped on a Leupold 3-9X40mm scope for the evaluation.

A WEIGHTY SOLUTION

Savage designed this gun on the Model 11/111 platform. It's got an internal box magazine, rugged synthetic stock, a full floated heavy 20-inch medium-contour barrel that's threaded at the muzzle and cut with a 1:10-inch twist, and iron sights that are rather odd-looking for such a rifle. But, one presumes that these high-profile sights are for hunting in the kind of heavy brush where one might pursue some nasty-tempered boar and find that even a 1X scope only gets in the way.

I noted that the rear sight blade could actually be removed if it is in the way of the scope, but when I mounted a scope on the rifle, the rear sight platform was just ahead of the front objective and out of the way.

But in deer and elk country, slapping on a scope is the smart move, and that's exactly what I did for the test and evaluation, if only to see just how well the Hog Hunter performs at a distance. I chose a 3-9X Leupold with Weaver Grand Slam QD rings, and went to work.

With a scope on top, this Savage bolt gun weighs north of 8 pounds, so it's not exactly

a first choice model for someone who does a lot of hunting and hiking. But for guys like me who prefer to sit on a stump or log, or at the base of a rock from which one can see fairly long distances, it's an ideal rifle that actually allows a hunter to take advantage of that additional weight. With a rifle that stout, it's easier to settle the crosshairs on a distant target and hold steady for a shot.

TRIGGER & STOCK

The best feature might just be the AccuTrigger. I've got that trigger on my own



The three-position thumb safety is a dandy. Shown here in the full-rear position, the action is locked and the trigger and bolt are locked tight.



In the center position, the safety allows the bolt to be opened, but the trigger will not budge. In this position, the Hog Hunter can be safely unloaded.



With the safety latch fully forward, the rifle is hot and ready to fire!

bolt-action Savage American Classic in .308 Winchester, and it's a dandy with a let-off at just about 3-½ pounds. I used that rifle to clobber a big 4x5-point mule deer buck in a canyon just off the Snake River a couple of years back, and the crisp trigger break played a big part in that event.

This trigger is adjustable, but to be honest, if it comes from the factory set like it was on my test piece, it ought to be left alone. If something ain't broke, don't fix it.

The synthetic stock has ample molded checkering on the grip and the forend, and



Workman's 3-9X Leupold left plenty of room for the rear sight to remain on the rifle, about 5/8 of an inch ahead of the objective bell.

QD sling swivel studs fore and aft, which is a good thing because you are going to want to sling this rifle for long treks. And there is something else. This bruiser has an oversized bolt handle that makes fast cycling a snap for any follow-up shots. The only thing I'd like to see added is some kind of knurling or checkering on the bolt knob for a sure grip in wet conditions.

There's also a three-position thumb safety, same as on my rifle, so carrying and shooting the Hog Hunter was like going



Workman took the Hog Hunter into the Northwest Cascades, where it is also capable of taming elk, black bear, mule deer, mountain goat, mountain lion and anything else that wanders into range.



The Weaver Grand Slam Lever Lok QD rings are the author's favorite. They're solid, come off and go on fast, and keep the scope in zero.

*"IT WILL TAKE
ON ELK, BLACK
BEAR, DEER AND
OTHER BIG
GAME WITHOUT
SO MUCH AS A
HICCUP."*

afield with a slightly overweight companion.

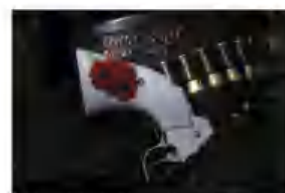
Savage also added a very modern recoil pad that sucks up the recoil. I really like this pad because I'm somewhat recoil sensitive, and thanks to the additional weight of the rifle, it makes for a rather comfortable shooting experience.

The stock is sort of an off-color green that Savage calls "natural," and the barrel and action are matte black. Since the scope and rings also had a matte finish, every-

thing came together rather nicely, albeit kind of homely.

Are there any obvious faults with the rifle? Frankly, I think the barrel is a little too heavy, but that's subjective, and as noted earlier, the additional weight does help reduce felt recoil. Maybe I'm just being picky, but being an old guy, I claim special dispensation. It does make the rifle feel a bit out of balance with the weight forward.

If this were my rifle, I would definitely mount a 3-9X scope with QD rings so that



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The heavy, 20-inch medium-contour barrel is free floating, which contributes to the rifle's out-of-the-box accuracy.



“WITH A RIFLE THAT STOUT, IT’S EASIER TO SETTLE THE CROSSHAIRS ON A DISTANT TARGET AND HOLD STEADY FOR A SHOT.”

I could swiftly pull the glass and switch to the iron sights. In my humble opinion, the Weaver Grand Slam Lever Lok steel rings are the best for this kind of application. All you need is your finger pressure to tighten them down, and they stay put. I’ve got sets on a couple of personal rifles and have never had a problem with them.

THE CARTRIDGE

Now, what about that cartridge? The .338 Federal has been around for a decade, and in that short time, it has definitely earned a reputation for hammer-slammng energy, as well as greater range than one might imag-

The front sight is very high profile with a bead, and the muzzle is threaded.



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At better than 100 yards, the author fired this three-shot string, adjusting after the first shot to put his rounds a bit higher. A couple of clicks back to the right will solve the windage problem, but this shows how tight the rifle can group once it is zeroed.



The rear sight is an interesting piece of work. It is adjustable for windage and elevation, and may be quickly removed when a scope is mounted.



The .338 Federal (left) and the .308 Winchester use the same cartridge case. The .338 is simply necked-out to accept the .338-caliber projectile.

ine for a round that uses a necked-up .308 Winchester case.

I read somewhere that the recoil is similar to that of the .30-06, but in my estimation, with this rifle, it's closer to the .308, making it easy to handle for just about anybody. Developed for big game including deer, elk, black bear and similar-sized animals, it should be simply devastating against those big hogs for which the rifle is named.

Depending upon the bullet weight, one can get lots of horsepower at decent veloci-

ties. I used factory loads from Federal with 200-grain softpoints. I know that Speer has a 200-grain Spitzer softpoint and a 225-grain boat tail softpoint, while Nosler has a 180-grain, 200-grain and 225-grain AccuBond, plus Partitions weighing 210 and 225 grains and a 200-grain CT Ballistic Silvertip. The .338-caliber pills from Hornady include a 185-grain GMX, 200-grain SST and Spire Point Recoil Proof, 225-grain InterBond, SST and Spire Point Recoil Proof, and 250-grain Spire Point Recoil Proof, boat tail hollowpoint and roundnose.



Savage equips the Hog Hunter with the AccuTrigger. The test rifle's trigger was set at about 3 pounds, broke crisp and did exactly what it was supposed to.



Molded checkering in the "natural" colored synthetic stock is perfect for hunting in wet or humid conditions.



SPECIFICATIONS

Model: Model 11 Hog Hunter

Manufacturer: Savage

Caliber: .338 Federal (also available in .223 Remington and .308 Winchester)

Barrel: 20 inches, matte black carbon steel

Stock: Synthetic, "natural" finish

Action: Bolt, with AccuTrigger

Weight: 7.25 pounds

Capacity: 4 rounds

OAL: 40.5 inches

MSRP: **\$578.00**

High on the Hog

"SAVAGE ALSO ADDED A VERY MODERN RECOIL PAD THAT SUCKS UP THE RECOIL."

For the handloader, this translates to all kinds of opportunity to experiment and find the right load for the particular game that you're after. Essentially, what you're talking about here is a round that can really put the hurt on anything up to and including moose, and at ranges out to 300-400 yards, and maybe beyond that.

I found loads that use some of the propellants I favor, including IMR 4895 and H4895 (they are *not* identical despite the similar designations), Benchmark and Varget. This just scratches the surface, too.

If your goal is to concentrate exclusively on wild hogs, you could do considerably worse than take the field with the Savage Hog Hunter, whether with factory ammunition or your own cartridges. This round has put the hurt on everything it has hit. Even the biggest hogs are in trouble.

SHOOTING STRAIGHT

Now, let's discuss trajectory a bit. At longer ranges, the .338 Federal is going to drop considerably. How much depends on the specific load and bullet weight, but it begins arcing downward at 300-400 yards, so the long-range shooter needs to take that into consideration or risk shooting under the target.

Within 300 yards, the .338 Federal has a trajectory comparable to other rounds in its class, meaning that you're going to be in the vitals at 300 by sighting your rifle to hit 1.5 to 2 inches high at 100.

Because it's a necked-up .308 case, this round should be easy to run through the dies. The finished cartridge should be no longer than 2.820 inches, and the maximum case length is 2.015, same as the .308 Winchester.

What else is there to say? The Savage Hog Hunter is a reliable bolt-action rifle chambered for a devastating cartridge. All that's required is for the shooter to do his or her job, and the end result will be meat in the cooler and on the table. **GW**

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Cougar



The Stoeger Cougar plays the middle ground between a really large full-sized autoloading pistol and a compact carry handgun, but it's versatile enough to serve in both roles. The Cougar is available in a variety of finishes such as the two-tone Brunton model shown here. The .45 version gets an accessory rail.

Country



ALTHOUGH STOEGER IS BEST KNOWN FOR VALUE-PRICED SEMIAUTO SHOTGUNS, THE COMPANY'S **COUGAR PISTOL** MAY BE THEIR BEST-KEPT SECRET

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

IN THE 1980S, GLOCK introduced American shooters to the concept of a polymer frame semiauto pistol, and although some steel gun stalwarts guffawed at the Austrian company for making “plastic” pistols, Glock laid the foundation for a polymer pistol movement we’re still experiencing today. The rising number of CCW permits issued has added to that movement and, consequently, an increased demand for lighter, thinner guns with fewer rough edges and external controls. This prompted even more companies to develop striker-fire polymer guns.

But steel guns aren’t gone. Case in point: the Beretta 92/96/M9. Despite its weight and complex (at least by today’s polymer gun standards) single action/double action controls, the Beretta is still the military’s arm of choice

and it’s still a standard-issue sidearm for many law enforcement officers. There’s also a pretty popular single-action semiauto on the market that John Browning designed...perhaps you’ve heard of it?

Stoeger Industries also has a steel-frame SA/DA pistol of their own, a model known as the Cougar. And while Stoeger’s Inertia-Driven and budget-minded shotguns are growing in popularity every year, there hasn’t been a whole lot of press on the brand’s semiauto pistol. Maybe it’s a bias toward brand new guns, or perhaps it has something to do with our new love of polymer firearms. It is most likely a bit of both. But the Stoeger has a lot to offer—an operating design thought by some to be among the most accurate pistol designs ever, a hefty double-stack magazine that holds plenty of ammo, and a variety of finishes and caliber options—all at a very affordable price.



The Cougar .40 shown here has a Brunton finish, which is tougher than bluing and protects the gun from grime and sweat.

A ROTATING BARREL

When the Cougar arrived, I was impressed by the look of it. The model I received, which was chambered in .40 S&W, had an all-black Brunton baked-on finish, the same durable coating that Beretta uses on its military sidearms. The finish was mirror-smooth. The grip was large, with vertical serrations on the backstrap and textured plastic grip panels bearing the Stoeger “S”.

Internally, the Cougar differs from most other semiautos because it relies on a rotating barrel design instead of the tilt-barrel design found on 1911s and the like. The barrel of the Cougar has a long, curved slot and a metal block under the barrel has a metal tab that indexes into that slot.

Upon firing, the barrel is pushed back by recoil, and instead of tilting it moves straight back and turns as rearward pressure forces the tab along the curved slot in the barrel. This system allows for tighter barrel/slide tolerances, at least theoretically, and there-

fore the rotating barrel design is said by some to have more accuracy potential than the tilt-barrel. A similar rotating barrel design is used on the Beretta PX4.

To function properly, the barrel must be fitted to the metal block that surrounds the spring—a fairly simple process if you have some idea of how the gun is designed to work. Breakdown is quick and easy—there’s a rotating lever on the left side of the frame that allows the slide, barrel, spring and block to be removed.

If you are a fan of the Beretta 92 then you’ll like the Cougar’s controls. As I mentioned previously, it’s an SA/DA pistol. It has an exposed hammer with a rounded spur, and there’s an ambidextrous safety/decocker on the slide. Pushing the lever forward and up deactivates the safety and makes it ready to fire. Pulling the safety back and down (a slightly more awkward motion) decocks the hammer. The hammer has a half-cock position, and in DA mode

you’ll hear an audible click when the trigger is pulled back far enough for the hammer to pass that position.

The front and rear white dot sights are machined into the slide and are therefore drift adjustable or, if you prefer, you could replace the Stoeger factory sights with something else. The sights are fairly tall but the square-notch rear and blade front offer a good sight picture, allowing for quick target acquisition. The slide stop is relatively long and easy to find, and unlike some smaller designs you won’t have to hunt for it and then fight to depress the stop. It’s easy to find and easy to use. The aforementioned breakdown lever requires you to depress the button on the opposite side to rotate and break down the gun.

WEIGHTY & WELL-BALANCED

The Cougar is a beefy gun at 32.4 ounces as tested, but it’s well balanced, and the extra heft helps mitigate the effects of recoil. Di-



The backstrap has vertical cuts, and the long, steep grip angle helps keep the shooter's hand high on the gun when firing—right where it belongs.

mensionally, the gun is very close to a Glock 19. While the Glock has a four-inch barrel, the Cougar has a barrel that's 3.6 inches long. However, there's less than a half-inch difference in overall lengths. The Cougar is about two-tenths of an inch wider.


Additionally, the Stoeger semiauto's sights are about a quarter-inch higher than those on the Glock. In terms of weight, the Glock's polymer frame makes it considerably lighter—a loaded Glock weighs less than the empty Cougar.

But extra weight is not always a bad thing. Nor is a wide, accommodating grip design. The large steel grip on the Cougar offers plenty of real estate for even the largest of hands, and the double-stack design ensures that it's wide enough to provide a secure hold under recoil.


As an added bonus, the tall, slightly tilted grip naturally directs the hand to a high position, which helps mitigate recoil for fast follow-ups. Even with hot .40-caliber defense



The Cougar's trigger is among the best SA/DA factory triggers you'll find. The double action pull is heavy and long but smooth, and the single action has a clean break that allows for accurate shooting.



The SA/DA Cougar has an exposed hammer with a half-cock position. The rear sights are dovetailed into the slide and are drift adjustable.



loads the Cougar is a manageable gun to shoot, in no small part because you have plenty to hold onto and a hefty gun that sucks out much of the .40's potent punch.

The Cougar came with two 11-round magazines (the 9mm version comes with 13-round mags, the .45 with 8-rounders). The magazine release is in the usual location just behind the trigger, but I found it to be a bit small and not as easy to find as other semi-autos. In fact, I found that it was much eas-

ier to roll the Cougar in my hand before punching the mag release, which isn't a major concern unless you need to swap out magazines in a hurry. I am a big fan of the trigger guard design, though; its design makes it very easy to index my finger when moving or reloading.

ON THE RANGE

The first range test involved shooting five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed

rest, and the Cougar performed very well. I used three different defensive loads—Hornady's FTX 165 grain, Federal's 155 grain HST load and Winchester's newly-introduced Defend 180 grain bonded jacketed hollow point load—and groups ranged from 1.85 inches out to 2.90 inches. This is very good accuracy for a factory pistol with a 3.6-inch barrel, better than what I've experienced from most tilt-barrel guns.

The rotating-barrel design proved to be reliable throughout the test, firing over 200 rounds without a hitch.



THE CARRY COUGAR

To meet the needs of concealed carry permit holders, Stoeger introduced the Cougar Compact, a 9mm version of the company's standard semiauto that shaves four ounces off the standard 9mm gun. That's still a lot of pistol, but the Cougar Compact does a couple things that other, super-sub-compact carry guns can't do.

For starters, it has a 13-round magazine capacity, which is pretty impressive for a carry gun. In addition, the double-stack magazine and added heft make shooting this gun way more comfortable than the little guns that many people carry. I can't wrap my hand around many sub-compacts and I usually end up leaving a finger or two dangling in space, which makes handling recoil much more difficult. The Cougar gives you plenty of room for your entire hand, making it a more stable and comfortable gun to shoot.

The Compact has the same bright, easy-to-see white dot sights and the same rotating barrel design, so you'll have a carry gun that shoots more like a full-size auto, which is nice. The Brunton finish protects the gun against the effects of daily carry—namely sweat and moisture, which can quickly ruin the finish of standard blued guns.

Best of all, the Cougar is priced below much of the competition, with an MSRP of \$469. If you're in the market for a concealed carry option and you prefer the feel of a near-full sized semiauto, then the Cougar Compact may be just what you've been looking for.

The Cougar's accuracy is enhanced by an exceptional trigger. It's rare to see praise lauded on DA triggers, but the Cougar's long, curved trigger is among the best I've found from a factory gun regardless of price. In DA mode there's considerable travel, but the trigger is smooth and doesn't stack. That smooth, consistent pull makes it easy to deliver accurate shots. In SA mode it gets high marks as well, and although there's a bit of travel when the

trigger comes tight you can expect a nice, clean, even break at just over 5.5 pounds.

Off the bench, the Cougar performed equally well. I set targets on the range at four to ten yards and shot them from stationary positions and while moving. The Cougar excels as a close-range combat pistol thanks to its short overall length and heavy frame, which help suck up most of the recoil generated by powerful .40 S&W defense loads.

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How's this for accuracy? This group was produced offhand at 21 feet using Federal HST ammo. This kind of accuracy is aided by a superb trigger, and although it isn't necessary it offers great peace of mind.

I tried my best to keep the Cougar's barrel hot, firing double taps while moving, emptying whole magazines into ten-yard targets, and performing near-middle-far drills on the range. That kind of shooting will expose flaws in any gun, and there wasn't much I didn't like about the Cougar. The magazines are easy to load, and the sights make finding your target and delivering a shot simple and quick.

The DA trigger pull seems exceptionally long, but the smooth pull makes for accurate shooting and follow-ups are extremely rapid with superb accuracy. The Cougar's steel design really helped with the one-handed drill. More and more defensive shooting schools are training their students to shoot with one hand, and the Cougar's heft makes it easy to deliver shots without the wild flailing associated with hot loads and light guns. With the Cougar in .40, I could deliver one-handed shots as quickly as I fired them with a compact, lightweight 9mm or .380.



The .40 S&W ammo tested was (left to right): Federal's 155 grain HST, Hornady's 165 grain FTX, and Winchester's 180 grain Bonded JHP.

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The Cougar is well-balanced and comfortable to shoot, even with powerful defensive loads. The wide grip keeps it planted and helps the shooter get back on target.



Cougar Country

SPECIFICATIONS

Model: Stoeger Cougar
Action: Rotating barrel semiauto
Capacity: 11
Barrel Length: 3.6 inches
Slide: Steel, Brunton finish
Frame: Steel
Sights: Three-dot front and rear, drift adjustable
Overall Length: 7 inches
Weight: 32.4 Ounces

MSRP: **\$469 (as tested)**

ACCURACY RESULTS: Stoeger Cougar .40 S&W

LOAD	Grains	Velocity (fps)	Best Group (in.)	Average Group (in.)
Federal HST	155	1,160	1.85	2.02
Hornady FTX	165	1,175	2.40	2.68
Winchester Bonded JHP	180	925	2.15	2.44

Accuracy results are based on five, five-shot groups from a fixed rest at 25 yards. Velocities are factory claims.

“...IT RELIES ON
A ROTATING
BARREL DESIGN
INSTEAD OF THE
TILT-BARREL
DESIGN FOUND
ON 1911S AND
THE LIKE.”

FINAL THOUGHTS

Is the Cougar a carry gun? Maybe. I know shooters who carry full-sized Beretta 92s, and they would consider the Cougar small. It's small enough to fit in a belt holster easily, but you'd better have a hefty belt (Stoeger also makes a carry version—see sidebar). I wouldn't hesitate to carry this gun under a coat, and it's just the type of gun I like to open carry when I'm working on the farm or wandering through the woods.

It's also a great home defense gun, although only the .45 model gets an accessory rail. Regarding options, there's a Brunton black version, a silver non-glare version with that same Brunton finish and an anodized alloy silver frame, or a two-tone model. As previously stated, it's available in 9mm, .40 and .45. And with MSRP's ranging from \$469-\$509 and street prices even less, you're getting a great value when you choose the Stoeger.

The market for polymer pistols will continue to grow, but the all-steel Cougar is still worth a look. It might not be the lightest gun, but it is extremely accurate and priced right. **GW**

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Build a Stand

OUR COLUMNIST TURNS “DO-IT-YOURSELF-ER” TO PROVE HOW EASY IT IS TO BUILD A STURDY AND PORTABLE TARGET STAND

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY DAVE WORKMAN

SHOOTING PROFICIENTLY TO DEFEND yourself in the home or on the street requires more than just a gun and ammunition.

It takes time at the range, and for many shooters, that can mean visiting an informal spot, typically somewhere on public land where it is less than polite to leave trash targets or makeshift stands lying around for someone else to pick up.

Over the years, I've used steel target stands, and some made from wood, but recently I decided to put together a new framework made from PVC pipe. And, since a few of you have commented on the one you've seen in some of my recent articles, I decided to become a “Do It Yourself” columnist for one month and tell you how I did it.

The way I figure it, if I can build one of these things, anybody can.



Use a jigsaw with a new blade for the sharpest and straightest cuts.



A PORTABLE STAND

The whole thing cost less than \$30, and as I said, anybody can do it. You'll find that it's an enjoyable way to spend an hour or so before you spend many enjoyable hours on the range, or wherever you decide to set up a target with a good backstop.

For starters, I simply went down to the local hardware store and bought four five-foot sections of one-inch PVC pipe, plus four plastic elbows and two three-way joints. Add to that a can of cement, and you're in busi-

ness. You'll also need a felt-tip marker and tape measure. I used a jigsaw to cut the pipe to length.

For the base, I cut one of the five-footers into equal lengths of 15 inches, but I've seen other guys do as little as 12-inches or as long as 18 inches. I settled on the 15-inch lengths because you can cut four equal pieces from a 60-inch piece of PVC.

Insert these lengths into either end of the three-way joints and cement.

Next, cut a length of pipe that will spread

the base legs wide enough to accommodate the target you plan to use between the five-foot uprights, to be added later. I use a Birchwood Casey silhouette target primarily, which measures 24-3/4 inches across, so my cross pieces (a second one is used atop the two uprights) are 25 inches so the target fits nice and tight between the uprights.

Now, it's important to NOT cement the elbows to the crosspieces unless you have them on a level table or some other surface. That way, the elbows will line up so the base and the uprights fit together evenly.

To make sure I get the same setup each time, I wrapped the ends of each base piece with duct tape.

Do not cement the uprights into the three-way joints. They need to stay loose for setup and takedown, so the target stand can lay down flat in the back of an SUV or pickup truck. If you want to tuck this thing into the

*"THE WHOLE THING COST
LESS THAN \$30, AND
ANYBODY CAN DO IT."*



Start by first assembling the raw material. Four five-foot lengths of PVC pipe, four elbows and two three-position joints.

trunk of a small car, simply cut your up-rights into two sections and add a joint in the middle.

Mounting target boards can be done in many ways. I chose butterfly clips wired to the top cross bar in the middle, and to each of the uprights. Simply drill a hole through each upright so you can push through a piece of wire that will then fasten one of the butterfly skeleton pieces of the clip.

Now, there's no need to rush out and buy a bunch of wire. I habitually save wrapping wires from different electronic products that wrap the cords and keep them tight in the packages. Don't toss these because they come in handy for all kinds of uses.

There's something else, too. I have seen people put bullet holes through wood, PVC and even metal uprights that

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This is what it should look like when fully assembled with a target board installed.

"THIS TARGET STAND WORKS GREAT AT ANY RANGE, AND ANY DISTANCE."

are a dozen or more inches on either side of the actual target. Frankly, anybody who shoots that poorly needs remedial training, or a visit to the optometrist. Repeat this until it is burned into your gray matter: "Center of Mass. Center of Mass. Center of Mass." That applies just as much when shooting targets as it does in a self-defense emergency.

This target stand works great at any range, and any distance. I can remove the silhouette and just substitute a piece of plain cardboard for sighting in a rifle. Some people will fill the base pipes with sand for weight, but I think it's better to simply drop a sandbag over the base to prevent a blow-over in a breeze. This stand is not very heavy.

Good luck putting together one of your own! **GW**



Apply joint cement and assemble the base pieces.



Workman put his new stand to work for a test of the new H&K P30SK pistol, and it will see lots more duty over the horizon.



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GOING HEAVIER with the 223 REMINGTON

IT IS NOT ALWAYS ABOUT HIGHEST VELOCITY



These are some of the best powders for heavy bullet loads in the 223 Remington.



Careful testing from the bench showed the differences in accuracy.

I would not elect to use a 223 in this way because I have better options. If a hunter has only a varmint rifle and has no other alternative with which to hunt larger game, bullet choice becomes vital. Fortunately, bullet makers have recognized this and as a result, there are numerous relatively heavy bullets available in 0.224-inch diameter.

Bullets in 0.224-inch diameter with weights in the 60-65 grain range are more strongly constructed than those intended for use only as varmint bullets. Even heavier 0.224-inch bullets are available, but they are

generally meant for long range shooting in target rifles and most require a barrel with a fast rifling twist to stabilize them.

However, bullets weighing around 60 grains are stabilized by the 1-in-12-inch twist often found in varmint rifles. Accordingly, my "heavier" bullet choice for the 223 Remington is those weighing 60 grains, and there are two reasons for this.

First, bullets of this weight can be safely driven close to 3,000 ft/sec, which results in a reasonably flat trajectory. Second, driven this fast, such bullets will expand reliably

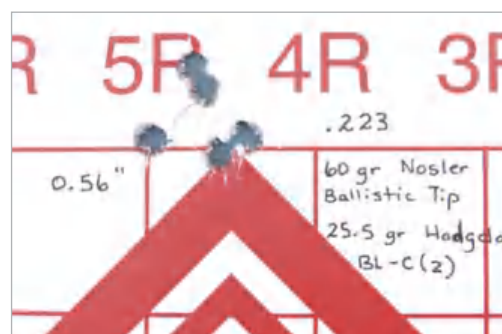
but still hold together well enough to give good penetration.

I have not had the opportunity to use my Savage Axis in 223 Remington on the large predator that I loathe, but that does not mean that load development has not taken place. As a result, I obtained a supply of 60-grain bullets that includes the Hornady Spitzer, Nosler Ballistic Tip, and Nosler Partition. Appropriate loads with those bullets can make a 223 suitable for game considerably larger than coyotes.

When loading the 223 Remington with



This 1.12-inch group has four shots that measure only 0.58 inches.



One of the excellent groups obtained at 100 yards is this 0.56-inch cluster produced with a load of 25.5 grains of BL-C(2) and the Nosler Ballistic Tip.

relatively heavy bullets, the best powders are those that have slower burning rates than those intended for use with 35- to 45-grain bullets. These include Alliant AR-Comp, Winchester 748, and Hodgdon CFE 223 and BL-C(2), among others. Since I have achieved good results in the 223 Remington with these powders in the past, they were chosen for this project.

For all loads, cases were trimmed to the recommended length, 1.750 inches, and primed with Winchester small rifle primers. Powder charges were weighed on an elec-

tronic scale with accuracy to at least 0.1 grain. All loads were tested in a Savage Axis with a 22-inch barrel. The rifle had a Weaver Classic 4-16X scope attached, and velocities were measured at 10 feet from the muzzle by means of a Competition Electronics ProChrono chronograph. Summarized in the accompanying table are pertinent data for the loads and the velocities obtained.

As shown by the data in the table, some of the loads produced at least 3,000 ft/sec with a 60-grain bullet. Such a load generates 1,200 ft-lbs, which is sufficient to dispatch

large varmints. Although I would not normally elect to do so, loads of this power could also be used on small deer if the range is moderate. Some factory loads that utilize 64-grain bullets have published velocities of approximately 3,000 ft/sec, so the top loads listed in the table should be considered just that—top loads.

Two of the loads listed, that with Varget and that with BL-C(2) and the Nosler Ballistic Tip, gave outstanding accuracy. It is also notable that seven of the nine loads put four shots out of five in under an inch. That level

Results obtained using 223 Remington loads in a Savage Axis (22-inch barrel)

Bullet	Case	Loaded Ctg., in.	Powder	Charge, gr.	Velocity, ft/sec	Group, inches
60 gr Hornady S.P.	Hornady	2.258	CFE 223	25.8	2953	1.40/0.94
60 gr Hornady S.P.	Fiocchi	2.224	Varget	25.5	3119	0.84/0.43
60 gr Hornady S.P.	Remington	2.225	AR-Comp	23.4	2933	1.24/0.78
60 gr Nosler Ballistic Tip	Hornady	2.250	CFE 223	26.0	3048	1.16/0.81
60 gr Nosler Ballistic Tip	Hornady	2.250	BL-C(2)	25.5	2785	0.56/0.53
60 gr Nosler Ballistic Tip	Hornady	2.253	Win. 748	24.8	2871	1.12/0.58
60 gr Nosler Partition	Hornady	2.248	CFE 223	25.8	2887	1.63/1.25
60 gr Nosler Partition	Hornady	2.248	BL-C(2)	25.8	2871	1.16/0.92
60 gr Nosler Partition	Hornady	2.250	Win. 748	24.7	2982	1.88/1.50

Average velocity is for five shots. Group size is for all five/best four shots.

These loads were safe and reliable in the author's rifle, but neither the author nor the publisher accepts any responsibility for their preparation and use by others or for typographical errors. These loads should be approached with caution.



The 60-grain bullets utilized in this project are (left to right) Hornady Spitzer, Nosler Ballistic Tip, and Nosler Partition.



Four out of five shots in this 0.84-inch group produced with the Hornady Spitzer give a cluster measuring less than half an inch.



For use on larger predators, this Savage Axis 223 Remington would be effective with bullets as heavy as 60 grains.

of accuracy is certainly adequate for taking shots at larger predators as long as the range is reasonable.

Having had such good success with lighter bullets in the Savage Axis, I was a little apprehensive regarding what to expect from loads using 60-grain bullets. The results I obtained convinced me that such loads have real potential as long as they are used judiciously.

The 223 Remington can be turned

into a serious game rifle with proper bullets. Fortunately, the reloader of a 223 Remington has many from which to choose. The results that I obtained show that several powders work well, however, before loading a large batch of ammunition, do some testing in your own rifle. The results you obtain may be quite different from those I obtained, but I will now be confident when I attempt to take the larger predator that I loathe. **GW**

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A long shot in steep country was required to collect this bruin, and the Weatherby Ultra Lightweight Mark 5 in .270 Weatherby Magnum was ideal.

A photograph of a dead black bear lying on its side in a forest. A person's hand is visible, touching the bear's head. The background shows trees and a hazy mountain range.

Best Rifles and Cartridges for Black Bear

PLANNING A BEAR HUNT THIS YEAR? IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU HAVE THE **RIGHT TOOLS** FOR THE JOB.

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

ACCORDING TO MOST ESTIMATES, North America is home to almost one million bears, and with more states opening seasons for bruins there's never been a better time in recent memory to book or plan a bear hunt. For the most part, selecting a bear rifle is relatively simple—but that's not always the case, and one key to picking the right gun is knowing where and how you'll hunt.

Bears are more variable in size than most big game animals, and while 150-pound bruins are the average in many areas, there's always the possibility of running into a real giant. Some black bears, particularly those found around agricultural areas in the southeastern United States, reach gargantuan proportions. This is due to a long growing season and plenty of food, but big bears are found in the far north, too. Even in colder climes where food sources are more limited a quarter-ton bear is not out of the question.

In addition to their range of size, bears are extraordinarily tough. With heavy muscle, thick hide and dense bone, bears can absorb a tremendous wallop and continue moving, so sometimes even the right cartridge in the right place will still result in a blood trailing job. Compounding the problem, their thick skin, body fat and long hair (in some climates) limits blood trails and can make follow-ups difficult.

Black bears can be extremely dangerous when wounded, and even a relatively small bear can inflict serious injury. The best option by far is to put the bear down quickly and efficiently with the first shot, both out of respect for the animal and for the safety of the hunter.



Bait hunts mean that the bear will likely be close and you'll have plenty of time to shoot, but having a handy rifle is a big bonus. This is the time when a lever action comes into its own.

SIZE AND METHOD MATTER

There are three primary methods by which most bear are harvested—over bait, using hounds or by spot-and-stalk methods.

Bait hunting is probably the most common, and it can certainly be very exciting. You'll often have multiple bears feeding very close to you, and in some areas, particularly in the more remote regions of Canada, bears have a proclivity for climbing into stands—sometimes while the hunter is present! One great advantage that bait hunting offers is time to look at and evaluate the bear.

Because many of us (myself included) aren't experienced in judging the size of a

bear, we need special help when deciding whether the animal we are looking at is a trophy or not. As bears feed around bait, you can look at their head size, the space between the ears and, more simply, their size relative to the bait can and competing bears.

If they're really big there's usually little debate, but borderline bears can require more time to judge when deciding whether or not to shoot. In addition, baiting offers a chance to make sure that you're not looking at a sow with cubs.

Spot-and-stalk hunting is often physically challenging and generally offers less time to shoot at a bear that is farther away. The gen-

eral tactic is to set up on a high point in bear country to glass for animals that look large enough, and once a specific bear is targeted the trick becomes moving into position for a clean shot. This can be a relatively easy process or more challenging because of steep terrain. Above all, you have to trust your ability to judge that the bear is mature, and you also need to know your range limitations. That being said, spot-and-stalk hunts are exciting, and although they tend to be physically challenging, they offer a great sense of accomplishment.

Hound hunting gets a bad rap, mostly from people who mistakenly believe that it's

easy. If you're booking a hound hunt for bears because you believe you'll simply saunter up to the tree, I have some bad news for you: you're going to be sorely disappointed because there's no formula regarding where (or if) the bruin will take to the tree-tops, and wherever the bear decides to go you must follow.

This sometimes means a long walk through rough country, and it's been my experience that a hound hunt for bears, while not as challenging as a spot-and-stalk hunt on average, can quickly turn into a marathon that tests your will.

THE BEST CARTRIDGES FOR EACH HUNT

With bear over baits, long-range trajectory and retained downrange energy are not as important as stopping power, maneuverability and the ability to deliver fast follow-ups. Most shots on baited bears are less than 50 yards, so bullet drop is rarely an issue. But you'll probably be maneuvering in a tree, and that means shorter rifles are best.

For me, there are several great options depending on the platform you intend to use. Bait hunting is perfect for lever-action rifles, which generally have a short overall length and functional iron sights, though scopes will work better in low light conditions. Lever guns also offer very fast follow-ups. If you make a good first shot then follow-ups aren't necessary, but, as I said, bears are tough, and I like to take every opportunity to put them down as quickly as possible.

If you shoot just behind the shoulder (as you should) bears often wheel around and bite. This gives you an opportunity to work the lever and place an insurance shot, which should also make the blood trail easier to follow. I believe that the classic .30-30 is a superb choice for bait hunting, but it is far from the only lever gun option. In fact, the .40s like the .444 Marlin, .45-70 and the most impressive .475 Turnbull are all better choices *if* you can handle the recoil. The big .40s leave a large hole, and they provide tremendous shock.

With bolt actions, your favorite deer cartridge will do fine, although I'd leave long-barreled magnums behind. Short carbines are best, guns like the Remington Model 7 and Model 673, the Winchester Featherweight, Savage's Bear Hunter, Ruger's outstanding new Guide Gun and Mossberg's



Recovering a big bear can be difficult, and you must make that first shot count. You need a well-constructed bullet with plenty of energy and you must be able to put it in the right place. Bears rarely injure hunters during follow-ups, but don't be foolish and put yourself and others at unnecessary risk.

Scout rifle. Calibers between .270 Winchester and .375 Ruger are effective, and the .308 and .30-06 offer plenty of load options, good bullets, plenty of power and they extend your range to several hundred yards. All scoped bait guns should have low-power variables, something like 1-4 or 2-7x being best.

When it comes to spot-and-stalk hunts, magnums are more useful. Remember, bears are tough and they can be big, so use a car-

tridge that is not only powerful but *retains* that energy over a long distance. I believe that bear cartridges start at the 6.5s and .270s as a minimum and move up to the .375s, and the middle-of-the-road 7mms, .30s, and .338s are the best option—if you can handle the recoil. This means your .270, .30-06, or 7mm deer rifle falls right in line—and that's true.

Those are three great bear cartridges, but if you're hunting big, open country you re-



ally need to think about a flat-shooting round. The ones listed above, particularly the 7mm Remington Magnum, will do just fine, but you should also consider other flat-shooting cartridges like the new 26 and 28 Nosler, the Weatherby Magnums from .270-.300, and the .300 Winchester Magnum. These cartridges certainly offer plenty of knockdown power and energy, and with a high-powered scope you can really reach out.

Hound hunting is a special consideration. Aside from the fact that the rifle needs to be chambered in a caliber powerful enough to stop a bear—and you'll be in close and they'll likely be agitated, so this is a special consideration—you'll probably want a bear rifle that's light.

While hound hunting might not require much walking at all, you might be traveling miles, and at the end of a steep climb you'll have to make a shot. I don't want a heavy gun with a long pipe in that situation. Instead, give me a light, short, handy rifle that will stop the bear quickly and effectively.

The lever guns work very well, and the .30-30 and .35 Remington do just fine. Even handgun-caliber lever guns like Rossi's

Model 92 in .454 Casull are great, and my buddy Aaron Carter's Thompson/Center in .500 S&W is another great option. Light bolt guns like Kimber's Adirondack will also get the job done.

Optics are nice but certainly aren't necessary, so I'd stick with low or no magnification models. Red dots from Aimpoint and Leupold are great choices. **GW**



The author's .270 Winchester from Montana Rifle Company shoots flat enough for spot-and-stalk hunts, but it would also work well for a bait hunt. It's a bit long for chasing hounds, and a lever action might be a better option.



The 7mms are ideal spot-and-stalk bear cartridges. On the left is the .280 Ackley Improved, an outstanding and highly under-rated cartridge. On the right is the popular and effective 7mm Remington Magnum.

BEAR BULLETS

Bears are tough, and you need a very tough bullet to bring them down. Because of their robust build, light bullets simply won't do the job of getting through all that hide and muscle, so you must rely on a bullet that will do the job every time. For this reason, stick with bullets that have a reputation for reliability. Usually this means a heavy copper jacket that is fused to a lead core or an all-copper projectile.

Nosler's Partition is a great choice, as is the Swift A-Frame and even Remington's time-tested Core-Lokt. There are a number of copper alloy bullets that will get the job done, too, and there is no chance of core separation with these rounds. Barnes TSX and TTSX and Hornady's GMX are excellent choices, and they're going to hold up well.

Bullets with light jackets will separate, especially if you hit bone, and you'll lose an injured bear. Solids will penetrate, and while they are fatal if they strike the right spot, they don't create massive wound channels nor easy-to-follow blood trails.



Kent Thomas took this beautiful bear with a .30-06, a great choice for most bear hunts. The rifle worked well on a bait hunt, but if you had to crawl through dense brush after hounds, something shorter would be on the order.

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A Smith & Wesson Sighti

INSTALLING FRONT AND REAR SIGHTS
ON THE S&W 686 REVOLVER



► TEXT & PHOTOS BY STEVE SIEBERTS

THIS MONTH WE'LL KICK OFF another project gun, the S&W 686 revolver. This gun was designed as Smith & Wesson's answer to the Colt Python, and I chose it because of its popularity for sporting and competition use.

The S&W revolvers have ruled various action shooting events going back to the original PPC matches of the mid to late 1950s. Back then, the dominant model was usually the S&W M10, which later had a heavy barrel and a sight rib attached. The gun also had extensive trigger work done to it, as well as other match grade enhancements.

Later, IPCS and NRA Action pistol events came about, and both had either a revolver division, or were shot revolver neutral. This means that the competitor shoots a stage with no more than six rounds, and therefore doesn't gain an advantage by going to the semi-auto.

Today, revolvers are a smaller part of competitive pistol shooting, but the competitors who do use them are die-hard fans of the gun. The revolver can still be very competitive, as anyone who has seen Jerry Miculek shoot can testify.

The S&W revolver is a great project gun not only because of its competition lineage, but because if you can work on one S&W revolver, you can work on all of them. In fact, if you can work on them, you can work on most other double-actioned revolvers, with the exception of the Colt Python, whose action is unique unto itself.

The gun that S&W sent me will be used as a competition gun for steel matches. Why steel? Because these are revolver neutral matches with five targets shot from start to finish, so they are a lot of fun with pretty much any gun, but especially the revolvers because they instill a unique challenge and impart additional shooting skills.

ng

The 686 with the Leupold Delta Point sight fiber optic front sight and Hogue grips installed.



The 686 has excellent balance for a competition pistol.

THREE MAIN AREAS

I'll review inspections of the gun in later issues, so for now let's just assume that we have a new gun, or a pistol that we know to be serviceable.

To change a service grade pistol into one that can be used for competition, you need to address three areas: sights, trigger, and accuracy. Shooting steel is normally done at fairly close range, so a match barrel is not needed since the gun already has enough accuracy to be competitive. And, although more accuracy is always better, we'll leave things as is so we can concentrate on sights and trigger work for this project.

The standard Smith & Wesson front and rear sights are pretty good for everyday shooting at the range or for defensive or CCW carrying duties, but for competition work—especially for shooting steel where speed is important—the sights need to be larger and of higher visibility.

I'll also put an optical sight on the gun and mount a Leupold Delta point.

The S&W front sight is a ramped front sight with a red ramp insert. This red ramp is okay, but for our project, something larger and brighter is needed. Enter the fiber optic sight. First used on competition shotguns, the fiber optic sight quickly found its way over to everyday handguns and has really taken off. Sight sets are now available for virtually all of the major handguns, such as the Glock, S&W's M&P series, and the Springfield XD lineup.

Replacing the front sight is a pretty straightforward operation, but there are a couple of points to remember. The front sight is held in place with a roll pin, but on some older guns the front sight was held in place with a solid pin.

If your gun has a solid pin, use the proper punch, which is a cupped-tip punch, available from Brownells. The cup tip will sit on

the rounded end of the solid pin and not slip off when you're trying to drive out the pin, as sometimes can happen with a standard flat punch pin.

If your gun has a roll pin holding in the front sight, use the regular 1/16th pin punch to drive out the pin from either direction. The second point to remember is that it's usually not a good idea to reuse roll pins, since once a roll pin is installed, it is compressed in the hole to provide holding power. They won't have the same holding power once they're driven out, so it's best to just discard them and use a fresh pin; don't worry, they're cheap.

The roll pins in S&W revolvers are smaller than a standard 1/16th pin, however, so you will need to reuse the one you take out. Once we have the old front sight removed, install the new front sight and drill the sight using the drill press with a fresh #53 drill bit.



Clamp the front sight into the padded vise and tap the barrel to remove the front sight blade after removing the pin.

Here's another tip: I only use drill bits a half dozen times before discarding them. The TiN coated drills I use have quite a bit of life, however, as the TiN (Titanium Nitride) coating on the drill greatly extends their life. I will drill ten or more holes with them, which is something I would never do with a standard drill.

After the hole is drilled, I degrease everything and use a very small amount of blue Loc-tite to hold things in place. I don't like to rely just on the roll pin to hold the sight. Remember, this is a competition gun and will be shot much more than a weekend plinker, so we need to make sure the sight stays on.

Once the sight is installed, we can then install the fiber insert, which comes in red or green. I'll opt for red, since that's the most visible under most lighting conditions. When installing the fiber insert, use a small drop of super-

glue in the center bar in order to secure the fiber insert in place.

The next step is to install a larger blade on the rear sight. Some may ask, "Why not a fiber optic rear sight, too?" This is a combination that some people like, but for speed shooting, the focus is on the front sight, and

the rear sight is just there as a reference because there's no time to line up front and rear sights. So we use a big, highly visible front sight, and a big blade to provide reference. This is a fast combination.

The Weigand rear sight blade we will use comes from the shop of Jack Weigand, for-

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The old front sight and the new one being installed.

“THE SCREW IS AN INEXPENSIVE PART, AND THE EASIEST WAY TO REMOVE IT IS TO ... KEEP TURNING IT UNTIL IT BREAKS.”



Stake the windage nut with the S&W windage nut staking tool.

THE RIGHT TOOLS

Always have the right tools for the job. Nothing is more frustrating than having to improvise something during an installation and damaging the gun because you don't have the correct tool for the job on hand. Cup tip punches and sharp drill bits always make the job easier, and you will end up with a more professional installation.

mer President of the American Pistolsmith's Guild. He was the 1999 Pistolsmith of the Year, and has been featured on numerous magazine covers. Weigand Combat makes great parts for the competitive shooter.

The rear sight is installed just like a regular S&W rear sight, but the blade is substantially larger. To rebuild the rear sight, or install a new blade on the rear sight assembly, the pistolsmith needs to break the original sight.

That's right, to fix it, we need to break it. That's because the screw is secured in place with the nut on the end of the screw, and is staked in place. The screw is an inexpensive part, and the easiest way to remove it is to just turn the screw in clockwise until it stops, then keep turning it until it breaks.

Remove the parts by pushing out the screw and nut, being careful to secure the spring and plunger in the screw head. Install the new blade, with the spring and plunger, with the screw nut on the end. Center the new blade, and secure the nut in place with the windage nut staking tool.

This is a special tool made just for this purpose. The pistolsmith should purchase a 10-pack of windage springs and plungers from Brownells. They are cheap and you will lose a few trying to get the windage screw in.

I remember that when I attended the S&W Armorer's Course for revolvers, most of us were launching springs and plungers all day long. Most of the students were police officers who were not used to handling small springs such as these. Everybody launched a few! If you are in a hurry or don't want to mess with the small springs and plungers, you can send the sight assembly to Weigand and for \$15 they will install the blade for you.



The new front sight installed.

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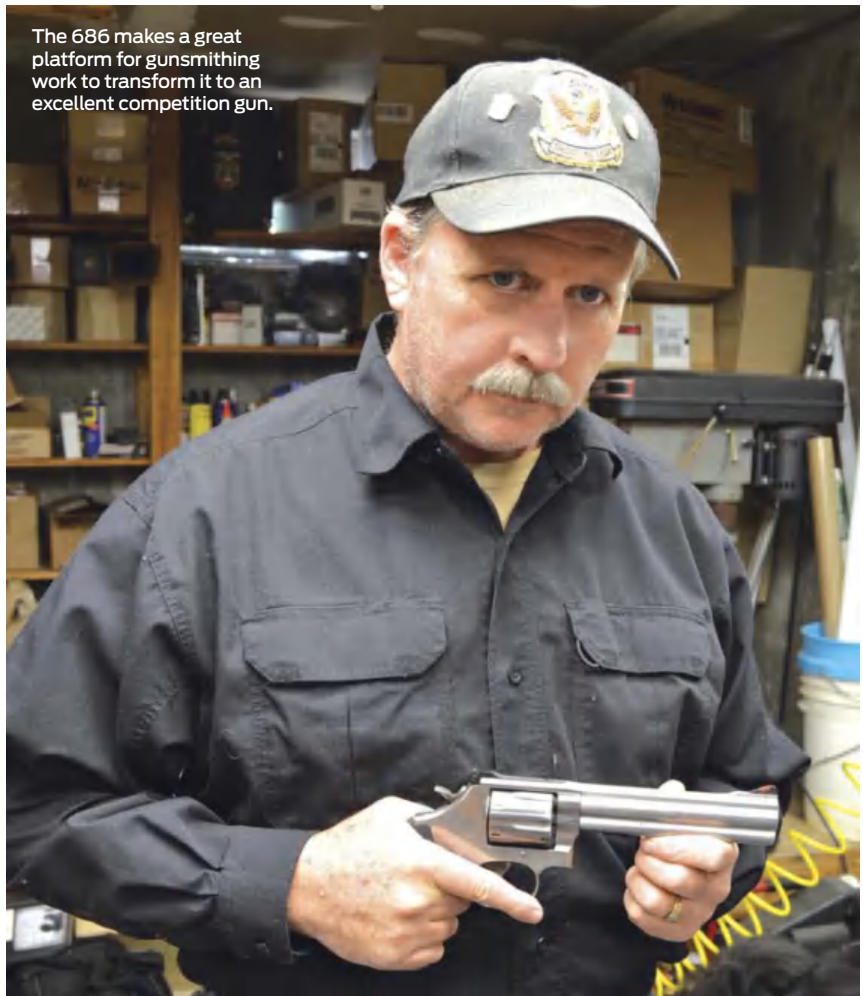
The Hogue walnut Jerry Miculek Signature grips.

Once the rear sight assembly has been installed, we need to remove it so that we can install the scope mount base for the Leupold Delta Point sight. Leupold provides a very good mount and base in order to mount the optics, but the aftermarket parts are also good. This gives the shooter another option to mount the sight, and the brushed aluminum base looks really nice with the stainless steel frame.

To install, simply remove the rear sight assembly and install the base to the topstrap of the revolver with the screws provided. Mount the Delta Point onto this base. I always use a small amount of blue Loc-tite between the base and the top strap of the frame in order to install the screws. Do not use Loc-tite on the screws that mount the Optic to the mount.

That does it for this month's column. Our S&W project gun will continue next time with an inspection of the S&W DA revolver, and trigger work. **GW**

The 686 makes a great platform for gunsmithing work to transform it to an excellent competition gun.



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Ruger's newest version of the popular LCR is chambered for the .327 Federal Magnum, and it's a handful.



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SIZZLING .327 FEDERAL MAGNUM

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY DAVE WORKMAN

SUBSCRIBING TO THE PRINCIPLE that good things actually do come in small packages, Ruger has introduced yet another version of its lightweight and reliable LCR double-action-only wheelgun, this time chambered for the impressive .327 Federal Magnum.

Depending upon the load, this little sixgun really bucks. But this writer found that the latest LCR incarnation delivers the goods in terms of reliability and size. The LCR Model 5452 has a stainless steel barrel measuring 1.875 inches that's cut with a 1:16-inch right-hand twist, making the overall length of this pocket revolver 6.5 inches.

It's light, hitting the scale at 17 ounces empty. The frame on this model, like the frames on the LCR-357 and the model chambered for 9mm cartridges, is made from blackened 400 series stainless steel, while the stainless steel cylinder is finished in Ionbond Diamondblack. I'm not entirely certain what this stuff is, but having field-tested LCR revolvers before, I can attest to its toughness.

What this means in practical terms is that people are likely to carry this revolver because it is nearly unnoticeable, whether in a holster, purse or pocket, and under all kinds of conditions. Translation: If you wind up in a situation where you need a handgun, you'll have it. In this case, you'll have six rounds of muscle to stop a threat.

Like other LCR models, this one has a patent-pending polymer "firing control housing," which is the lower part of the revolver that also includes the trigger guard, which is suitably oversized so it can be used while wearing gloves. The Hogue Tamer Monogrip was a bit small for my hand, leaving my pinky down below the butt. However, this can be swapped out for a different grip model including a Crimson Trace Lasergrip.

It's got a u-notch rear sight and a pinned ramp front sight with a white stripe. They work okay, though this is no long-range target gun. It's strictly for defensive purposes, in a caliber that packs a wallop.



The Ionbond Diamondblack finish on the upper steel frame matches perfectly with the polymer lower frame that houses the action.



The front sight has a high-visibility white stripe making for quick acquisition. It's pinned on and can be replaced.

HIGH CALIBER PROTECTION

Perhaps the best thing about this revolver is that it can also function quite well with .32 H&R Magnums and .32 S&W. Frankly, due to the light weight of this revolver, some people may prefer the .32 H&R Magnum for defensive use, as it is a potent little cartridge in its own right. I've got a Ruger single-action chambered in that caliber, and it's a zippy round that was originally developed for an old Harrington & Richardson double-action defensive revolver designed primarily to be used by women.

The trigger on my test piece was smooth and well-designed for double-action-only shooting. I tested the gun with Low Recoil 85-grain Federal Hydra-Shoks and American Eagle 100-grain JSPs, and I can say without fear of contradiction that with the latter round, recoil was robust. Smaller-framed shooters might even suggest it is difficult to handle, but on the plus side, it's supposed to exit the muzzle at 1,500 fps according to the ballistics information on the box.

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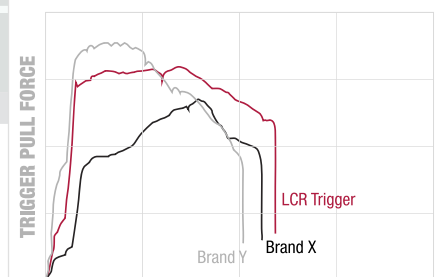
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TRIGGER PULL COMPARISON

Trigger Pull Comparison

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The LCR is also sized to fit into a jacket pocket. This is how the author figures a lot of people will likely carry this little sizzler.



The LCR's smooth trigger allows for an equally smooth stroke through the double-action-only firing sequence.

For what it's worth, the .32 H&R Magnum's contrast with the .327 Federal Magnum might be comparable to using .38 Special +P ammunition in a .357 Magnum in terms of relative recoil and downrange punch.

Before getting too far along, one might naturally wonder why anyone should go with this model rather than an LCR in .38 Special. Well, for starters, the .327 Federal Magnum has more velocity and energy than a .38 Special. Also, this model carries six rounds while the .38 Special version holds five.

Let's do a quick matchup with comparable bullet weights. In the .38 Special +P Hornady, for example, the 110-grain FTX



NEW RUGER BRAND KNIVES FROM COLUMBIA RIVER KNIFE & TOOL

Show me a person who carries a defensive sidearm and I'll show you someone who has a utility knife, and just in time for this review, Ruger and Columbia River Knife & Tool (CRKT) announced a series of knives wearing the Ruger brand.

CRKT has built a reputation for durability and the ability to hold an edge. I've got a couple of knives from this outfit, and they are sharp enough to shave with. I have used one to take the hide off of a mule deer buck, while the other has come in handy for a few cutting chores, and I have quickly honed it back to original sharpness with a few strokes on a diamond rod.

According to Ruger, the diverse collection includes models for hunting, tactical applications, every day utility and self-preparedness. There are both fixed-blade and folding models, and they come in a variety of sizes and finishes.

In all, there are about two-dozen choices, and there's at least one or two that should appeal to just about everybody.



load leaves the muzzle at 1,090 fps with 290 foot-pounds of energy. The 100-grain .327 Federal Magnum launches at a reported 1,400 fps with 435 foot-pounds of energy. No matter how one does the math, that is going to get someone's attention.

Now, with a barrel that's slightly shorter than two inches, you're very unlikely to achieve the advertised velocity from any load. It just doesn't happen. But there is still enough of a wallop to stop a fight.

On the plus side, with that short of a barrel, the muzzle blast is fearsome and the muzzle flash can light up a dark room. Even if you miss, you're going to frighten the hell out of whatever it is you're shooting at.

CARRY WORTHY

Next, what about carrying this gun? The good news is that there is an abundance of holsters out there that fit the LCR. I

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Workman says the new revolver is lightweight, easy to carry and packs a punch.

even managed to carry the test gun comfortably in a DeSantis pancake-style holster built for a J-Frame Smith & Wesson, as well as an old upside down Safari shoulder rig that was designed for a 2½-inch S&W Model 19.

What originally put the LCR on the map for me was its weight—even when chambered for the .357 Magnum and 9mm with their stainless steel frames—because it seems perfect for the trail. Out here in the Pacific Northwest, a lot of hikers carry defensive sidearms and these folks are very weight conscious.

From experience on backcountry trails, I can attest to the desire to avoid packing around a heavy revolver or pistol. After a few miles they become an anchor that you'd rather not have around, except when you suddenly need it.

There's no such problem with the LCR.

When Ruger introduced the LCRx it really got my attention because it has an exposed hammer, an adjustable sight, and it can be fired both single- and double-action. I think an LCRx model in .327 Federal Magnum would be a good "next step."

For now, what you have is a pretty good defensive double-action-only handgun that is virtually impervious to the weather. Being in the Northwest, rain is a fact of life, and I have yet to see one of these LCRs so much as hiccup when conditions change.

Ruger packages the LCR with a soft padded case that has a stout zipper. It's a useful accessory into which one can stick a small cleaning rod and a couple of patches, and there's also a security padlock in the box.

A FINAL WORD

For someone looking to purchase a lightweight, reliable, simple-to-operate revolver that fires a hard-hitting cartridge, this latest version of the Ruger LCR may be exactly what you've been waiting for. With the versatility of being able to also fire the .32 H&R Magnum, one has a choice of power levels that addresses just about every chore.

Give this one a very serious look. It's a potent option. **GW**



SPECIFICATIONS

Model: LCR Model 5452

Manufacturer: Sturm, Ruger

Action: Double-action-only revolver

Caliber: .327 Federal Magnum

Capacity: 6 rounds

Barrel: 1.875 inches

Sights: Fixed, front blade, rear u-notch

Frame: Polymer grip frame, blackened 400 series stainless

Grips: Hogue Tamer Monogrip

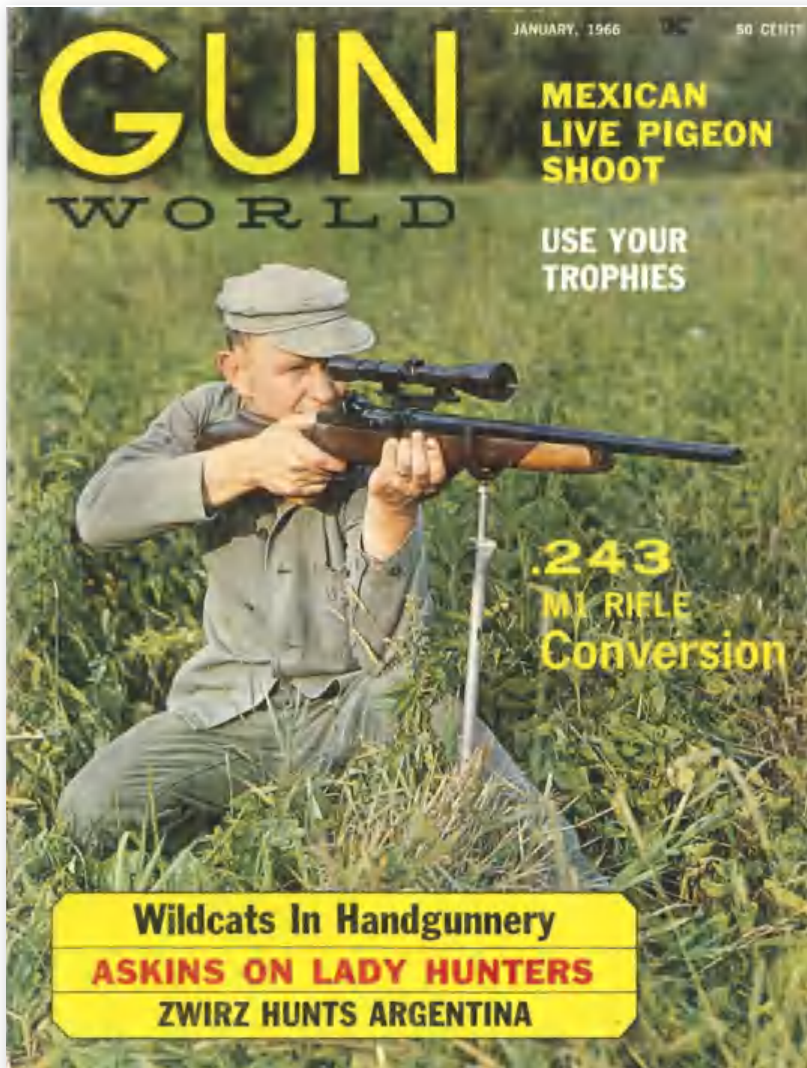
OAL: 6.5 inches

MSRP: \$619.00

Light,
Compact,
Reliable

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Well-Traveled SLIDE ACTION

The cover of our January 1966 issue featured William H. Page, Jr. testing out an M-1 Garand that had been modified as a .243 Winchester varmint rifle.

► BY CRAIG HODGKINS

As always, one of the primary features of our January 1966 issue was a field test. This time around, it was of Remington's Model 760, a slide action rifle that promised over-the-counter accuracy to "match that of the average bolt-action."

According to Dan Cotterman, who helped test the Model 760, the original version of the rifle dated back to the early 1950s, but a few new tweaks to the gun had put it back on *Gun World's* radar.

To make things more interesting, Cotterman wanted to test the gun in .280, in

addition to some of the other, more common calibers. When asked why, our intrepid associate editor (and reloading ace) made his position very clear.

"I just wanted to write about it," he opined. "It's got more on the ball than it's been credited for and it irks me to see a good cartridge like the .280 passed by... don't they know this is just the good ol' 7mm/06, except better? It's about time someone got on this thing and started putting out the good word."

The rifle logged a good deal of mileage

during the time it was in our editorial hands. First, it accompanied Cotterman on a chuck hunt in Utah, and then traveled off to Molokai, Hawaii for an axis deer hunt. Next up was a trip to Catalina Island to shoot at some goats.

If those seem like a curious mix of targets, all of this was made a bit easier by simply switching out the barrels on the Model 760 from a .257 Roberts to the .280 for the trip to Hawaii.

"Changing barrels had been one of Cotterman's inspirations," stated the article. "His logic...had been that the barrels would exchange without mishap as long as the cartridge head diameters were the same...Thus, the .270, .280, .308 Winchester or .30/06 could be used. The .257 Roberts...(also) has the right head size to interchange successfully. Extra barrels are not expensive and make the 760 an excellent candidate for 'all-around gun.'"

And, although Remington was officially a bit leery of Cotterman's plan to "quick-change" the barrels using a single tool to break loose the action tube, the *Gun World* team was impressed with the gun's performance in both accuracy and dependable service. **GW**

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